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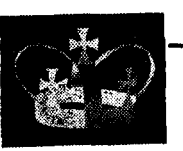
COLUMBIA  COLUMBIA

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FREDERICK CREWS teaches English at Berkeley. . . . DENISE LEVERTOV taught at Vassar last year. This year she was going to take a year off, she told us, but found herself involved in anti-war activity. . . . HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER's "autobiography" is from Poems For People Who Don't Read Poems, which Atheneum will publish in November. . . . ELEANOR C. MUNRO is Associate Editor of Art News. "Aspen I" is her first published poem. . . . IRVING HOWE is now working with Eliezer Greenberg on an anthology of Yiddish poetry in English translation. . . . LEO E. LITWAK lives in San Francisco and has recently finished a novel about the labor wars of the late 30's. . . . Simon and Schuster is publishing a volume of MICHEL BUTOR's essays this spring. . . . JAMES T. VALLIERE lives in New York. . . . ERNST PAWEL grew up in Yugoslavia. He lives in New York and is at work on a novel. . . . DAVID KALSTONE teaches English at Rutgers, and EDWARD W. SAID teaches English at Columbia. . . . HELEN McNEIL is doing her Ph.D. at Yale. . . . DAVID T. BAZELON is on a Guggenheim this year. . . . MILLICENT BELL has recently returned from a year in Palermo, Sicily, where she was a visiting lecturer at the University of Palermo.

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Frederick Crews

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

> *"Après tout rien ne remplace les amitiés de notre enfance."* — CONRAD (LETTER TO MARGUERITE PORADOWSKA, OCTOBER 16, 1891)

Predictions about the future ranking of authors should be made with the greatest tentativeness or not at all. In retrospect it is easy to see that literary value in any given age has been glimpsed through a haze of ideology (it wasn't long ago that *By Love Possessed* was thought by many to be the Great American Novel). The academy, that home of disinterested taste, cannot be appealed to as a referee; there a swelling GNP of discreet praise for every "major author" is bound to be heard, and one author may be favored over another simply because he lends himself to a more labored approach. Joseph Conrad is a case in point: he was trilingual, he was influenced and influential, he did some obscure things that need to be "researched," he studded his works with symbols and he exuded a moral portentousness that both invites and resists analysis. Most "Conradians" would find it hard to separate these professional conveniences from the question of Conrad's ultimate merit. Those of us who are involved in the quaint modern industry of explaining literature are assailed sometimes by a doubt as to whether we even know what we like. To say what some future generation would like is quite beyond our power; the closest we can come is to try to define for ourselves the shape and limits of an author's imaginative world.

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For Conrad, however, this is evidently a difficult undertaking. Everyone recognizes — in passing — that his fiction is pervaded with uneasiness, but something about Conrad urges his critics to hurry on to the "moral issues" which are taken so very seriously. One can read a great deal of commentary before coming across any sustained discussion of the wishes and fears that lie behind his art, energizing it and yet warping it into something quite distinct from dramatized philosophy or nautical talespinning. We are told over and over that Conrad preferred responsibility and discipline to self-indulgence, but what must have been painfully defensive for Conrad somehow comes out sounding merely thematic. The final Conradian gesture, whether of courage or duty or tragic pessimism or human solidarity, gets most of the attention while the mental turmoil that precipitated it gets lip service. What is engaging about Conrad for me and I daresay for others is the part of his imagination that is prior to this withdrawal into gesture — the part that Marvin Mudrick refers to darkly, without explanation, as Conrad's "suppressed . . . nightmares." But it is one thing to sense this fact and another to bring it into critical focus. On the whole the "close analysis" of our time has been devoted not to understanding anxiety but to mollifying it.

A prime instance is F. R. Leavis' widely quoted chapter on Conrad in *The Great Tradition*. Leavis is made uneasy by Conrad's "adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery," but it wouldn't occur to him to inquire *why* Conrad writes this way. He is too busy showing that despite his imperfections Conrad is a great novelist, since he produced "work addressed to the adult mind." What the adult mind seems to approve is a combination of tangible realism (a "vivid essential record, in terms of things seen and incidents experienced by a main agent in the narrative, and particular contacts and exchanges with other human agents . . .") and bracing moralism ("he does believe intensely, as a matter of concrete experience, in the kind of human achievement represented by the Merchant Service — tradition, discipline and moral ideal . . ."). Leavis wants to convince himself that behind the expansive adjectives sit good English nouns, "firm and vivid concreteness" and characters "each having a specific representative moral significance." This clinging to the palpable and the banal is in a curious sense a plausible response to Conrad, who wanted to see his fiction as Leavis sees it and

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would have been grateful for such cooperation.[1] Whereas most critics merely underrate the atmosphere of guilt and depression that encircles Conrad's world, Leavis is positively determined to ignore it. His favorite novel, *Nostromo*, has "a certain robust vigour of melodrama . . . completely controlled to the pattern of moral significance." "There is plainly no room in *Nostromo* for the kind of illustrated psychology that many critics think they have a right to demand of a novelist. . . ." In short, there is plainly no room in Leavis for Conrad.

The American academic reply to Conrad's problematic quality is more businesslike and complacent than Leavis': explication replaces value-judgment. Take, for example, the three casebooks in which scholars quarrel politely over what "Heart of Darkness" truly means. The specific job is to decide whether Conrad wanted us to be just like his narrator Marlow or to look down on him as morally inadequate. Since Conrad was in fact much too involved with Marlow to conceive of either of these cautionary ideas, the issue is agreeably difficult to settle; recourse must be had to patterns of imagery and allusion, in which, it is supposed, the author's lessons have been imbedded. Thus for one critic the allusions to the *Aeneid* constitute the hidden key; for another it is the allusions to the *Inferno*; for another it is the allusions to Buddhism, which show us some remarkably flattering things about Marlow which are not even hinted in the literal plot.[2] Depending on whether they find Marlow a satirized

1. But for Conrad the matter wasn't so easy. "Even writing to a friend — to a person one has heard, touched, drank with, quarrelled with — does not give me a sense of reality. All is illusion — the words written, the mind at which they are aimed, the truth they are intended to express, the hands that will hold the paper, the eyes that will glance at the lines. Every image floats vaguely in a sea of doubt — and the doubt itself is lost in an unexplored universe of incertitudes [Letter to Edward Garnett]." This is Leavis' "gallant simple sailor" whose genius was "a unique and happy union of seaman and writer."

2. "Although qualified to enter nirvana, like the true Bodhisattva, Marlow remains in the world to work for the salvation of all people. In his stage of enlightenment he teaches what his descent into the imperfections of the human soul has taught him — egoless compassion. Cancelling out all personal desire and fear, he has made available to humanity the gift of complete renunciation. To every suffering, striving creature, trapped in the karmic processes (enslavement to matter), he offers the inexhaustible wisdom of selflessness."

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"persona" or a saint, the critics discern that "Heart of Darkness" is really a grail quest or a protoexistentialist essay or an attack on Christian hypocrisy or a critique of imperialism. In fundamental respects these interpretations are alike. All are concerned with some equivalent of salvation — a subject whose appeal these days seems restricted almost exclusively to people on the academic ladder. All take for granted the greatness and the single-minded didacticism of Conrad's novella. None tries to think of Conrad as a troubled man who worked amid the prejudices of his age and the exigencies of his own nervous mind. The critics have paid him their highest compliment: he has been graduated from an author to an Assignment.

It should be noted, however, that the most refreshing exceptions to this trend are provided by Americans who share their colleagues' feeling that Conrad's mysteries can be decoded. The pivotal issue is whether Conrad himself grasped the deeper consistencies of his art. In *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*, Thomas Moser concluded with a certain embarrassed surprise that Conrad's celebrated "later affirmation" makes excellent sense as a pseudoaffirmation, a whistling in the dark. By exposing a disparity between statement and emotional tone, Moser threw into question the whole genteel enterprise of understanding Conrad through his "views." Not surprisingly, Moser's book has been something of a black sheep among Conrad studies, but now it has been confirmed and expanded in many directions by Bernard C. Meyer's *Joseph Conrad; A Psychoanalytic Biography*. It is a telling reflection on literary study today that this book, which aspires merely to say what Conrad personally was like, should provide insights into his fiction that go beyond anything offered by his professional critics. Being a psychoanalyst, Dr. Meyer takes for granted a continuity between the author's psychic life generally and the symbolic world of his fiction; this simple assumption, without which no incisive criticism is possible, has not been drummed out of him by graduate training in "English."

In making Conrad fully and plausibly human for the first time, Dr. Meyer's book will give a jolt to many critics whose readings, though they purport to be independent of biographical trivialities, in fact rely heavily on a sentimental view of the stoical mariner Conrad. It ought to be harder from now on to take this line. The Conrad who recommended stoicism was in his private life a hypochondriac and

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at times a suicidal defeatist; the Romantic lover of the sea was bored to fury whenever he had to pass much time on it; the lover of truth had a way of lying about his past; the defender of chivalry made babyish demands on his wife and resented the existence of his children. Conrad's idolators will have to ponder such incidents as his tossing his infant's clothes out a train window, or his retiring to his room for three weeks when the family maid died and writing melancholy letters from "Your boy" to his wife downstairs. It seems cruel to mention these long-available details of petty behavior, which could probably be matched from any great writer's life, but the cruelty is toward a false image and not toward Conrad, whose dignity consisted precisely in his struggle to overcome his emotional incapacities.

Paradoxically, I suspect that a certain iconoclasm toward the beauty of artists' lives may be conducive to an honest respect for their art. However eager we may be to look up to a novelist for moral guidance, this wish is clearly not what involves and holds us in his fiction. If fiction teaches a lesson it is only as a by-product of something more crucial, a shared experience; not ideas but fantasies entice us into someone else's imaginative world. It is no coincidence that Moser and Meyer, with their interest in aspects of Conrad's work that contradict his deliberate moral intentions, can make better sense of verbal nuances and oddities of plotting than other critics have done. No moral or formal commentary can account for the fact that Conrad's best work, in Mudrick's words, produces an effect of "obstruction and deadlock, an opposition of matched and mutually paralyzed energies. . . ." Conrad's most significant level of discourse is the unconscious level, where inadmissible wishes are entertained, blocked and allowed a choked and guarded expression.

The atmosphere of Conrad's fiction is only partly one of physical challenge; there is always an opposite pull toward easeful death. The source of this urge is obviously his own depressive tendency, which he fought, disguised and tried to negate in his art as in his life. And yet he is a consistently autobiographical writer; the effort to shout down his deepest impulses entails an incessant recasting of his psychic history. As Dr. Meyer points out, "almost without exception Conrad's heroes are motherless wanderers, postponing through momentary bursts of action their long-awaited return to a mother, whose untimely death has sown the seeds of longing and remorse, and

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whose voice, whispered from beyond the grave, utters her insistent claim upon her son's return." The fathers of these heroes, like Conrad's own father, tend to have outlived the mothers for a while and then died or departed, leaving the sons to brood over their intimidating high-mindedness and disastrous fanaticism. This concern with the posthumous grip of the parents amounts to an oblique assigning of blame for the inhibition which characterizes Conrad's protagonists and is never adequately explained on "realistic" grounds. Conrad tells us in effect that his characters cannot involve themselves emotionally because they suffer from fixation; they are too busy fending off resentments and longings toward the departed elders to permit themselves anything more than the most furtive encounters with their contemporaries.

It is startling to see how all the peculiarities of the Conradian world fall into place in this perspective. Like Hemingway, Conrad wavered between a maudlin *Weltschmerz* and a defensive assertiveness about the importance of manly style; the two attitudes are psychologically consistent in that one is an antidote to the other. The value of action for such a writer is measured by the inertia that must be overcome to achieve it. Manhood is always in doubt, and its reconfirmation can only be made believable in an exclusively masculine ambience hedged with rules and physical difficulties. Hence the otherwise inexplicable feeling in Conrad that nautical duty and discipline and trial constitute a welcome respite from something more fearsome. In a word, that something is sexuality. Conrad can permit himself to imagine a love relationship only if it is a matching of racial opposites — that is, if it contains an alibi to the accusation of being latently incestuous. When the lovers are of similar background they lock themselves in what Dr. Meyer calls a morass of inhibition, "all the while engaging in a ruminative chatter that at times approaches sheer double-talk." But Conrad's precautions do not stop here. His heroes, for all their exotic adventures, amount to virtual eunuchs, while his heroines tend to be awesome, androgynous, self-sufficient monoliths who can be fought over but not fertilized. His heroes' mortality rate rises sharply as they approach these Brobdingnagian ladies, who evidently pose a menace more forbidding than any hazard of the male world. Death is at once a symbol of castration and the surest escape from it, a flight from incest and a return to it — and,

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of course, by killing off his heroes Conrad spares himself the awkwardness of trying to depict love scenes when his mind is possessed by fantasies of this sort.

The critics have been hard pressed to say why Conrad succeeds despite his evasions, which they prefer to minimize. But the question has been wrongly put: Conrad's evasions themselves serve a function within his economy of "mutually paralyzed energies," and criticism should be able to say what the function is. Conrad's uniqueness does not consist in the virtues for which he is most often praised — vivid detail, evocative scenery, suspense, moral concern, a sense of the heroic — but in the fact that he carries these traits along in a nose dive toward self-destruction. He is simultaneously terrified at existence and a connoisseur of its heightened moments, at once a nihilist and a raconteur. This tension is sustained by the "adjectival" rhetoric which looks so foolishly obfuscating when it is extracted for analysis. Even the memorable sentences, the ones that strike us as profoundly true, serve to mediate among Conrad's contrary impulses. Take, for instance, his haunting remark in *Nostromo* that "in our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part." That is classic Conrad, not only because it contains a flash of tragic insight but also because it blurs responsibility: to think of oneself as helpless within a metaphysical void is to assign an external cause for one's prevailing depression. I suggest that this quasi-confessional mode is Conrad's forte and that we are more affected by it than we may care to admit. Conrad indulges our fears of isolation, neglect and victimization by malign higher powers — the fears of an anxious infant — without locating their source. There is something luxurious about the Conradian *Angst;* it comforts us because it is shared, indeed it is built into the order of things, and we combat it with the fellowship of our orphanage. Underlying everything is the seductive, unmentionable thought that it is not so bad after one's fitful strivings to sink back into the maternal nothingness.[3]

This is not to deny what everyone feels, that Conrad is a stoic writer, but rather to identify his chief antagonist as the despairing

3. For a fuller psychoanalytic discussion of this side of Conrad, see Norman N. Holland's essay, "Style as Character: *The Secret Agent,*" in the Summer 1966 *Modern Fiction Studies.*

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side of his own mind. The external sources of gloom, "the solitude of the sea" and "the inscrutable eyes of the Most High" (I am quoting the Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly*), are not so much combated as they are sought out as metaphors of preexisting inhibition — and very precise metaphors at that, since psychologically they amount to allusions to the parent figures with whom Conrad is unceasingly involved. The real agon in Conrad is the struggle against inhibition. It is no small point in his favor that he always tried to resist the impulse — indulged, for example, by Henry James — to pretend that his taste for sexless irresolution was a superior achievement of some sort. Every Jamesian plot puts a thick moral varnish on the necessities of the Jamesian temperament, but Conrad did what he could to oppose the passivity which usually has the final say in his works. Common human experience was sacred for Conrad, as it distinctly wasn't for James, because he grasped at it for rescue from the real destructive element, his instinct for failure.

When this aspect of Conrad's fiction is perceived, he is apt to appear a psychological ironist, a student of the way the misfortunes of nervous, lonely dreamers are determined, not by the cruel fates as they imagine, but by their own masochism. There is evidence for such readings; what is doubtful is that Conrad expected them. His engagement in his plots would seem to have more to do with self-exculpation than with dispassionate analysis. The semblance of irony is thrown up by his need to review his misgivings about himself, but when the misgivings become too insistent they must be replaced by muddle. Conrad typically diverts our interest from the hero's gloomy mind to his lush surroundings, which are stocked with misplaced energies; we expect confessions and instead we get tropical storms. The very fact that the plots are so crammed with adventure is comprehensible in this light. The hero is kept too busy staving off real "savages" and villains to spare time for self-inquiry, and in most cases we are finally meant to think of him as a victim of hard luck. Thus Conrad avails himself of projection — into the landscape, into "the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part" — in order to blunt an insight which would amount to self-analysis. Conrad the celebrated realist brings to mind Genet's sardonic definition of verisimilitude: "the disavowal of unavowable reasons."

For the comfort of disavowal Conrad pays a price in stereotyped

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characterization, melodramatic incidents and the overworking of exotic props. (The three traits are really one, the negation of what is complicated, personal and paralyzing by what is simple, alien and active.) Not surprisingly, the works that have stood up best — nearly all of which were written in the so-called "Hueffer decade" of 1899-1909, when Conrad felt himself to have an ally against despair — are those which come nearest to self-confrontation. In *Lord Jim*, for example, though it is never stated in so many words that Jim is to be held responsible both for his aberration on the "Patna" and for his passively accepted "punishment" in Patusan, Conrad at least allows us to infer the logic connecting the two parts of the story. By dividing his own mentality into Jim and Marlow, furthermore, he is able to muster a degree of detachment from Jim's tendency to blame external forces for his doom. In contrast, the author of such late novels as *Chance*, *Victory* and *Suspense* sides with Jim; in Albert Guerard's words, "evil and failure in this new cleansed moral universe are presumed to come from outside rather than from within." Significantly, the most conspicuous change occurs in Conrad's treatment of women. Though he never at any period recognized that misogyny is more an affair of male psychology than of female sin, in his later phase he felt compelled both to idolize womankind and to denigrate it with slanderous generalities, both to try his hand at idyllic love scenes and to wilt them with the abhorrent language studied by Moser. It is evident, as Dr. Meyer has shown in detail, that Conrad's later fiction is ridden by the same mechanisms of denial and projection that came to dominate his psychic life after his total breakdown in 1910 — during which, according to Mrs. Conrad, he let loose a "stream of disjointed accusations concerning my moral and spiritual character."

As an example of the way these deep constraints can mar an otherwise promising novel, consider *Victory*. Among critics who take Conrad's "later affirmation" at face value it is regarded as a near masterpiece.[4] Yet the whole novel is built upon an anomaly which

4. Leavis, for instance, feels cheered by a novel containing so many "upright, sensitive and humane individuals . . . — 'we sailors,' the feeling is. . . ." And he reminds us that Heyst, whatever his problems may have been, does make a "tragic pronouncement in favour of trust in life" — shortly before committing suicide, but no matter.

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Conrad seems unable to control: as the hero gets (verbally) more committed to involvement in the world, his remarkable passivity is not overcome but intensified. In effect Axel Heyst does nothing to defend himself and his mistress Lena from the four villains whose chief business seems to be to persecute him. The atmosphere of muffled depression which has accumulated over many chapters is discharged through a series of weirdly static *tableaux* in which Heyst has no efficient part. This immobility is contagious; the main villain, Jones, turns out to be almost as much a bystander as Heyst, and what they witness is confusing in the extreme. Whatever passion Conrad had intended to explore is shunted off onto the lecher Ricardo and Lena, who is promoted rapidly from a meek and threatened chorus girl to a typical Conradian Amazon, statuesque and *immensely powerful. She mesmerizes* Heyst, *Jones is terrified at* the thought of her and the would-be seducer Ricardo addresses her in a way that makes one reach for Kraft-Ebbing. "What you want is a man," he tells her, "a master that will let you put the heel of your shoe on his neck." Instead of indicating that there might be something a bit odd about such a relationship, Conrad proceeds to a climactic scene that is perverse in every sense. Lena succeeds in acquiring Ricardo's knife, not to protect herself but to secrete it between her legs so that "the dreaded thing was out of sight at last," while Ricardo shows the nature of his sexuality by crawling across the room and timidly begging Lena to stick out her foot: "Ricardo, clasping her ankle, pressed his lips time after time to the instep, muttering gasping words that were like sobs, making little noises that resembled the sounds of grief and distress." When things have reached such a compromised point it is understandable that Conrad should halt them with a gunshot that seems to have been fired by Heyst but in fact has been fired by Jones, and that seems to have merely wounded Ricardo but in fact kills Lena. No wonder, too, that after this charade the familiar objects of Heyst's room should appear to him "shadowy, unsubstantial, the dumb accomplices of an amazing dream-plot ending in an illusory effect of awakening. . . ."

Viewed as fantasy, all the literal peculiarities of *Victory* belong together: the rescue of the mother-Magdalen (that is Lena's name) from a paternal seducer (Schomberg); the flight of the incestuous pair to an island retreat where further aggressors arrive to renew the

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father's claim; the mother's transformation, under this threat, from ward to protectress, while the hero-son becomes more infantile; the pseudosolution of denying female "castration" (Lena's acquisition of the knife, plus the eroticization of her foot); and a self-immolation that is meant to cancel all filial presumption. Implausible as these strategies may sound to "literary" ears, they are common in Conrad's art — in his life, too, for that matter. But their immediate importance for *Victory* is that they explain its bizarre episodes and Conrad's failure to see how they must strike the reader. He cannot detach himself adequately from Jones's antifeminine ravings and Ricardo's fetishism because, quite simply, they are his own; all he can do is to foist them off onto exaggeratedly "other" antagonists of his exaggeratedly Christlike hero. To perceive what Conrad must have been wrestling with in the act of writing is to see why he repeatedly assures us, with subtle cavils, of Heyst's respect for his father's memory, and why Heyst behaves as if he were not so sure of his unimpeachable right to Lena and why Lena herself is uncomfortably convincing in her pretense of wanting to abandon Heyst. The novel's aesthetic incompleteness is a consequence of its censored self-debate: the details that stand out as blemishes are coherent only as replies to charges that Conrad has suppressed in the interest of his dubious tranquillity.

It may be possible now to appreciate the link between Conrad's artistic freedom and his capacity to manage psychological insight. Given his makeup, he had to deal regularly with obsessional themes, and he could never distance himself from them in the manner, say, of Thomas Mann. But he could, at his best, harmonize them with a plot which was manifestly "about" a psychic bondage of some sort, even if it had to end in equivocations. The trouble with *Victory* is that Conrad wants no part whatsoever of the forces that are tyrannizing over his plot; the result of his divided purpose is a sulky and confusing reticence. In all his finest novels and tales he is moving toward, not away from, a recognition that character is destiny. In these works the charged language, the undercurrent of *double-entendre* which was bound to be present anyway, works with the momentum of the plot, and we are carried through an experience that feels single and whole.

Here, however, Conrad's cultural remoteness from us becomes pertinent. Conrad was on the whole a good Victorian, which is

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to say that he was earnestly overwrought about maintaining order and decency in his mind, and was apt to mistake the effects of repression for the structure of the universe. Even in his own time he was not a "modern." He lived long enough to call Lawrence's writings "Filth. Nothing but obscenities"; and he used his resonant prose to shore up semblances of the piety which all the great modern writers began by smashing. There was no real choice involved in his continuing to work his customary vein, telling fireside tales of adventure after Joyce and Lawrence and Yeats and Eliot had turned their backs on the philistine public of their day. Conrad and the *hypocrite lecteur* needed each other's company; in order to have access to his creativity he had to believe he was engaged in validating common mankind's good opinion of itself.

His critics, by and large, have shared this opinion, and some have gone so far as to suggest that it is precisely his conventionality that guarantees his stature: Conrad still tells a story, he speaks to Everyman, he still believes in virtue, etc. It is questionable whether this popular reasoning, which ignores everything latent and cherishes the hollowest conscious avowals, really protects Conrad's standing; it seems rather to turn him into the complacent bore he sometimes aspired to be. To put supreme value on obstacles which he set against the deepest current of his art is to forfeit any hope of explaining his power. It would be better to take account of his Victorianism from the beginning, which means above all to recognize that the Conradian experience, while intense and cathartic, is built around taboos that have lost much of their sacredness. Given the Victorian rules of the game, Conrad's grandiose but barely sustained duplicity with himself can be understood as the enabling condition of his narrative energy.

In order to pose this issue concretely, let me return in some detail to "Heart of Darkness," which is surely Conrad at his best. This is not to say that its intellectual content is especially profound or even clear; on the contrary, the one definite point that emerges from the cacaphony of explication is that the appeal of this story cannot rest on its ideas. I suppose it was by working in an irresolute state that Conrad managed to keep the source of his inspiration so extraordinarily open. What matters, in any case, is that nearly everyone can respond to the symbolic experience at the base of his plot and feel the consonance between overt and latent emphasis. As a delibe-

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rately "psychological" tale, a pilgrimage toward some debasing revelation about human character, "Heart of Darkness" is not immobilized by totally contradictory intentions in the manner of *Victory*. Marlow tells us explicitly that Kurtz is "the nightmare of my choice," and no subtle inferences are needed to establish his ambivalence toward Kurtz. We see, for example, that he yearns to hear Kurtz's voice but cannot stand to hear of the natives' obeisances to him, we see him hanging on Kurtz's dying words but refusing to approach the corpse or witness its disposal and we see that he is willing to lie on Kurtz's behalf even though he regards him as a degenerate. It is Marlow himself who finally concludes, "I had no clear perception of what it was I really wanted," and who surmises that he has had an "unconscious loyalty" to Kurtz. Thus, though we are not meant to decipher exactly what is meant by "the horror," "the fascination of the abomination," and so on — indeed, though Conrad expects us to share Marlow's and his own feeling of being assailed by "something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul" — we know at least that Marlow's adventure amounts to an uncanny self–unfolding.

No one, to my knowledge, has bothered to define the psychological content of this adventure,[5] but it is hardly obscure. Just consider: a sunken, ascetic narrator who fervently believes that women should be kept quarantined "in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse," tells us that he felt irrationally compelled to visit a dark and mysterious continent, a "confoundedly big" and "dumb thing," "and I had heard Mr. Kurtz was in there." Since childhood he had yearned to visit this area, and now at great risk and in the face of Kurtz's hostility he arrived via a river described as "an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land." After passing jungle of "vengeful aspect" whose rank and matted vegetation appeared ready to "sweep every little man of us out of his little existence," he eventually found the much-respected Kurtz in a state of depravity, accompanied by a savage mistress in a wilderness "that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and

5. See, however, Richard F. Sterba's perceptive "Remarks on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in the July 1965 *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association.*

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brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions." Now withered and helpless, and rescued by the narrator from "certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites," Kurtz acknowledged "the horror" of his experience and died, after which the narrator found himself strangely interested in protecting the dead man's reputation — especially in the eyes of a marmoreal, mourning lady who overrated him.

If such a plot were recounted to a psychoanalyst as a dream — and that is just what Marlow calls it — the interpretation would be beyond doubt. The exposed sinner at the heart of darkness would be an image of the father, accused of sexual "rites" with the mother. The dreamer is preoccupied with the primal scene, which he symbolically interrupts. The journey into the maternal body is both voyeuristic and incestuous, and the rescue of the father is more defiant and supplantive than tender and restitutive. The closing episode with the "phantom" woman in a sarcophagal setting would be the dreamer–son's squaring of accounts with his dead mother. He "knows" that parental sexuality is entirely the father's fault, and he has preserved the maternal image untarnished by imagining that the father's partner was not she but a savage woman, a personification of the distant country's "colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life." But given the anxiety generated by his fantasy of usurpation, he prefers to suppress the father's misdeeds. Such a tactic reduces the threat of punishment while reestablishing the "pure" mother-son dyad. Only one complaint against the sainted mother is allowed to reach expression: the son tells her with devious truthfulness that the dying sinner's last word ("horror!") was "your name."

I do not want to review the abundant evidence that this "dream" is indeed the shaping force in "Heart of Darkness"; this fact will prove if anything too apparent to an unprejudiced reader who goes over the story with attention to its language and the stages of its plot. Derivatives of the primal scene await the hero everywhere: the African bush swarms with "naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes," "a black and incomprehensible frenzy," "a great human passion let loose," "the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation" and so forth. In such surroundings the threat of castration from the two classic sources, the father's wrath and the mother's body, is relentless;

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the landscape becomes a Freudian obstacle course. Let one example suffice:

> I avoided a vast artificial hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine. It wasn't a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. . . . Then I nearly fell into a very narrow ravine, almost no more than a scar in the hillside. I discovered that a lot of imported drainage-pipes for the settlement had been tumbled in there. There wasn't one that was not broken. It was a wanton smash-up. At last I got under the trees. My purpose was to stroll into the shade for a moment; but no sooner within than it seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. . . .

To look at such a passage with comprehension of its plentiful symbolic detail is to have removed oneself from Marlow's literal difficulties; the text threatens to become no longer a story but a clinical document.

Conrad specialists have yet to face this eventuality, but their reaction can be predicted. Nothing is more repugnant to most literary scholars than the thought that their favorite author was prey to obscene wishes and worries. When simple incredulity does not dispel the evidence, they attempt a more sophisticated accommodation: "Freudian insights" are welcomed into the roomy mansion of criticism to coexist peacefully with insights of every other sort. Each "meaning" is taken as further testimony to the author's conscious art; if it becomes necessary to recognize that, say, castration anxiety is a feature of the text, then the author can be credited with a prescient exposé of his hero, who is now seen to lack masculinity *and* divine grace. Thus the last and least sincere stand against mental strife is a specious hyper-Freudianism which takes for granted a pre-Freudian writer's conscious manipulation of psychoanalytic categories as if they had been common knowledge all along. By means of such sophistry an aloof, tastefully dehumanized notion of creativity can be upheld while token deference is being paid to the irrational.

Perhaps, then, it is worthwhile to belabor the obvious point that "Heart of Darkness" is in the most agitated sense an autobiographical work. Far from criticizing Marlow, Conrad was using him to recapitulate and try to master the Congo experience he himself had sought out and undergone in 1890 — an experience that led not to

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philosophical conclusions but to a physical and nervous collapse. Conrad's Congo interlude presents exactly the interpretive problem for his biographers that "Heart of Darkness" does for his critics; in both cases he went out of his way to make a real journey coincide with an unconscious investigation of his morbidity. It could be shown that "Heart of Darkness" is packed with family allusions so private that no concept of "conscious art" could make use of them. In various ways Kurtz amounts to a vindictive reconstruction of Conrad's father,[6] and the story alludes not only to the Congo voyage but also to the childhood period of exile in Russia after Conrad's mother, like Kurtz's Intended, had retired to a "sepulchral city" with "an ashy halo," leaving Conrad to cope with a father who inspired what Jocelyn Baines calls "admiration and contemptuous pity." Then Conrad like Marlow must have "resented bitterly the absurd danger of our situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonouring necessity."[7] Whether or not this cryptic

6. Both Kurtz and Korzeniowski — the names are alike — are intellectuals and versifiers; neither can be properly said to have a profession; both have dabbled in journalism and written pamphlets; both have messianic political ambitions and a mixture of refinement and demagoguery; both are accused of disrupting the orderly domination of a victimized territory; both die far from home, maintaining almost until the end a grandiloquent intention to return and prevail; both are remembered as prematurely withered and helpless, yet oppressive; both are famous for their arresting voices and their ability to persuade; both seem addicted to self-pity; both refuse an offer of rescue; both leave literary remains; both profess a high-minded Christianity but have experimented with dissipation. The family of Kurtz's "Intended" objects to her engagement to him; so did Evelina Bobrowska's family object to her engagement to Apollo Korzeniowski. These parallels, all of which can be inferred by checking "Heart of Darkness" against Jocelyn Baines's biography of Conrad, receive further credence from Bernard Meyer's conclusion that "there was something of his father in every story [Conrad] had written."

7. Of these allusions to childhood dependency one deserves special interest, not only because it has been a crux but because it epitomizes the privacy and anguished sincerity of the story's autobiographical reference. Marlow finds Kurtz attended by a remarkably boyish Russian, a "harlequin" with a peeling nose, who sits at Kurtz's feet and tries to think the best of him, as the well-bred, inwardly unforgiving Conrad must have done with his father in Russia. This figure of submission had formerly been rebellious against his father, an arch-priest; he "had run away from school, had gone to sea in a Russian ship; ran away again; served some time in English ships; was now reconciled with the arch-priest. He made a point of that." Beyond

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aspect of the story is recognized, it should be clear to everyone that Conrad as well as Marlow is rattled by the idea of Kurtz, who is melodramatically overdrawn and yet scarcely permitted to appear.

In a broader sense we can see that Conrad's involvement in the unconscious allegory of "Heart of Darkness" explains its combination of hallucinatory vividness and garbled ideas. The whole account of European imperialism in the Congo is brilliantly convincing, not because of any developed ideology on Conrad's part but because in his struggle with Oedipal "savagery" he feels within himself the pathology of men who want both to improve the brutes and to exterminate them. Because he thinks incessantly of usurping the father's power and privilege, he grasps the zeal to lord it within a cutthroat bureaucracy and to "tear treasure out of the bowels of the land." No one is better at investing real observations of folly and sadism with the fever of a mind that has already imagined the worst criminality and severest punishment. What he cannot do, however, is relinquish this charmed mood or think clearly about its basis. Since everything that is necessary to Marlow's sanity is necessary to Conrad's, he cannot crawl out of Marlow's mind even for a moment. Hence the difficulty he has in conceiving of the Congolese except as objects of persecution or diabolical headhunters; he too shares the need for bogeymen whose howls and dances will be, not signs of a culture, but simply abominations. He cannot even have Marlow say without hedging that Christianizing the Congo is a mistake, for he still aspires to put down the heathen in himself. In short, Conrad finds no point of repose from which to assess the ordeal he puts us through. All he can muster as a substitute are dabs of moral philos-

question this is Conrad's own story, with the difference that Conrad finds reconciliation less feasible. But the image of the obedient harlequin has a still more precise origin in Conrad's memories. In the letter I have quoted as an epigraph he lamented his post-Congo depression and compared himself wistfully to the "Polichinelle" — or Pulcinello — of his childhood. This gentlemanly toy, he explained, had put up with all manner of tender abuse from its master. Despite such indignities as a broken nose and a missing eye (the symbolism is obvious), and the licking off of its paint, the harlequin had "received my confidences with a sympathetic air. . . ." When Conrad, near the end of his tale of filial usurpation, tried to introduce an image of the reformed son, his latent cynicism hit upon this figure. To obey was to be a clown, a "polite little Pole" whose nose and eye were forfeit to the paternal avenger.

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ophy — treasured like Scripture by his critics — to plaster over his confusion about the causes of his melancholy.

To a certain degree, then, "Heart of Darkness" *is* a clinical document, a record of persisting misery. This is not to deny its power as art but on the contrary to suggest where its power must lie. Despite some details which owe their significance to memories that have not been made available in the text, the anxiety of the whole story comes across unmistakably. We do not yet have an aesthetics of anxiety — indeed, the New-Critical enterprise can be construed as a skirting of the problem, a defensive anchoring of emotion in "objective correlatives" and self-referring tensions — but in reading a deeply logical work of anxiety we seem willing to concede the suitability of its "adjectival" and "vaporous" language to hidden referents. If we feel "Heart of Darkness" to be somehow coherent despite its patent vagueness and its air of near hysteria, this is because a return of the repressed is not lost on us. We know it is right for Marlow, with his prurient interest in his elders' misdeeds, to be drawn into a journey that leads to knowledge of certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, and on the same level of awareness we know he must make amends for having entertained such a revelation.

I doubt whether any biographical knowledge about "Heart of Darkness" or any critical account of its logic will make its disguised content too available for dramatic illusion to be sustained. Such information only helps to explain why the story seizes us anew with every reading. To say this, however, is not to say that Conrad's sensibility is our own. Nihilism, which in Conrad is surreptitious and nicely padded with scenic effects, has become aggressively explicit in the serious literature of our day, and anyone who prefers Conrad's mode is likely to be conscious of doing so nostalgically. The most awesome and permanent Conradian secrets, the unseen magnets which bind every detail in the field of his plots, are now matter for offhand jokes: "I was on my way to my mother," says Beckett's Molloy, "whose charity kept me dying." A contemporary writer could be forgiven for envying Conrad's relative ignorance, which enabled him to be earnest about fending off vice and to write stories that merge self-realization with believable and intrinsically lively adventures. Nothing is more symptomatic of the present predicament than that Molloy, the man who is wholly at peace with his bodily self, should

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have nowhere to go but around in a circle on his autoerotic bicycle. Lesser writers than Beckett, having forfeited much of the power of latent reference, are rapidly exhausting the power to shock. Aesthetic complexity would seem to be one of the casualties of desublimation.

If this is so, then we have Conrad's neurosis and the style of his culture to thank, not of course for his genius, but for the special quality of his appeal. In the manuscript of "Heart of Darkness," immediately after Marlow's plea that women be kept apart in their beautiful world, Conrad had added a typically lurid but singularly revealing outburst: "That's a monster-truth with many maws to whom we've got to throw every year — or every day — no matter — no sacrifice is too great — a ransom of pretty, shining lies. . . ." That he decided to suppress the remark instead of merely editing out some of its agitation may indicate nothing more than a shrewd assessment of his readership, but that he wrote it in the first place is a mark of his true inner situation. Lying to (and about) women, the quintessential article in the Victorian *modus vivendi,* was so important to Conrad for his own reasons that he found himself actually putting the requirement into so many words; his curse and opportunity was his need to deal at close range with the gaping monster of his fantasies. Whoever begrudges him his distracting maneuvers has not sufficiently understood the precariousness of the civilized equilibrium he sought to maintain. In retrospect Conrad's lurking skepticism about the strength of conscious decency looks so warranted by public events that we may feel tempted to credit him with a clairvoyant modernity, a vision of general collapse, but precisely because he writhed under the nightmare of history he could not be its interpreter. He did not formulate contradictions, he lived intensely with them and transcribed them into the terms of art. To demand of him something more static and placid, as the bulk of our criticism has implicitly done, is only to manifest in a subtle way what our civilization is now proving with brutal plainness: an incapacity even to imagine what it is like to be human and oppressed.

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Richard Poirier

LEARNING FROM THE BEATLES

Has anyone been able completely to ignore *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*? Probably not. But the very fact of its immense popularity with people of every age and persuasion is almost a guarantee of its not receiving the demanding critical attention that it calls for. It isn't enough to say that it is the latest and most remarkable of the thirteen albums composed and performed by the Beatles since 1964; some such claim could have been made for each album when it appeared. *Sgt. Pepper* isn't in the line of continuous development; rather, it is an eruption. It is an astounding accomplishment for which no one could have been wholly prepared, and it therefore substantially enlarges and modifies all the work that preceded it. It sends us back to the earlier Beatles not for confirmation of the fact that they have always been the best group of their kind. Rather, we listen for those gestations of genius that have now come to fruition. And the evidence is there: in each album which, while being unmistakably theirs, is nonetheless full of exploratory peculiarities not heard on the others; in the way the release even of a single can set off a new surge of energy in their many imitators; in a self-delighting inventiveness that has gradually exceeded the sheer physical capacities even of four such brilliant musicians. The consequent necessity for expanded orchestral and electronic support reached the point where the Sgt. Pepper album had to be wholly conceived in studio with as many as forty-eight instruments. Meanwhile, still in their mid-twenties they have made two movies, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, which are in spots as good as the Marx brothers, and their most talented member, John Lennon, has written two books of Joycean verbal play that suggest why no one is ever in danger of reading too

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much into the lyrics of their songs. The Beatles are now beyond patronization, and this is especially satisfying to those like myself who have wondered how much longer the literary academic adjudicators could claim to be taking the arts seriously by promoting a couple of distinguished novels every year, a few films, some poems, maybe a museum show and, if they're really lucky, a play.

Of course to delay a revolution there are ways and ways of finally paying considered attention to the lower orders. One way is to sociologize in the manner, McLuhan or pre-McLuhan, that forces the good and the bad in the popular arts to lie down in the same categories. There'll surely be a piece announcing, say, that the Beatles "represent" — a favorite word in the shelving process — not just the young but an aristocracy of the young. And of course they are aristocratic: in their carelessness, their assumption that they can enact anyone else's life just for the fun of it, their tolerance for the things they do make fun of, their delight in wildness along with a disdain for middle-class rectitudes, their easy expertness, their indifference to the wealth they are happy to have, their pleasures in costume and in a casual eccentricity of ordinary dress, their in-group language not meant, any more than is Bob Dylan's — another such aristocrat — to make ordinary sense. That kind of accommodation is familiar by now, and so is another, which is to admit them into the company of their "betters." You know, the way jazz is like Bach? Well, sometimes they are like Monteverdi and sometimes their songs are even better than Schumann's. But that won't work either. Liverpool boys of their sort have been let into Eton before, and not on the assumption that it would be the style of Eton that would change.

It won't be easy to accommodate the Beatles, and that's nowadays almost the precondition for exciting the pastoral concern of Responsible Critics. Literary and academic grown-ups will discover that their favorite captive audience, the young in school, really have listened to the Beatles' kind of music and won't buy the yarn of significance that ensnares most adult talk about the other arts. Any effort to account for what the Beatles are doing will be difficult, as I've learned from this not very extensive and inexpert try, but only to the extent that talking about the experience of any work of art is more difficult than talking about the theory of it, or the issues in it or the history around it. The results of any such effort by a number of people

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would be of importance not just for popular music but for all the arts. People who listen to the Beatles love them — what about that? Why isn't there more talk about pleasure, about the excitement of witnessing a performance, about the excitement that goes into a performance of any kind? Such talk could set in motion a radical and acutely necessary amendment to the literary and academic club rules. Since the exalted arts (to which the novel, about a century ago, was the last genre to be admitted) have all but surrendered the provision of fun and entertainment to the popular arts, criticism must turn to film and song if it is to remind itself that the arts really do not need to be boring, no matter how much copy can be made from the elaboration of current theories of boredom.

Critical confrontations initiated in this spirit could give a new status to an increasingly unfashionable kind of criticism: to close-up, detailed concern for performance, for enactment and execution in a work of art. Film and song, the two activities in which young people are now especially interested, and about which they are learning to talk fairly well, may yield something to other kinds of scrutiny, but they yield much more to this kind. So does literature, on the very infrequent occasions when it is so treated. The need is for intense localization of interest and a consequent modesty of description, in the manner of Stark Young's dramatic criticism, or Bernard Haggin's writing about classical music and jazz or Edwin Denby and, more recently, Robert Garis on ballet. Imagining an audience for such criticism, the critic thinks not of a public with Issues and Topics at the ready, but rather of a small group of like-minded, quite private people who find pleasure in certain intensive acts of looking and listening. Looking and listening to something with such a group, imaginary or real, means checking out responses, pointing to particular features, asking detailed questions, sharing momentary excitements. People tend to listen to the Beatles the way families in the last century listened to readings of Dickens, and it might be remembered by literary snobs that the novel then, like the Beatles and even film now, was considered a popular form of entertainment generally beneath serious criticism, and most certainly beneath academic attention.

The Beatles' music is said to belong to the young, but if it does that's only because the young have the right motive for caring about it — they enjoy themselves. They also know what produces the fun

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they have, by phrase and instrument, and they're very quick, as I've discovered, to shoot down inflated interpretations. They should indeed exercise proprietary rights. This is the first time that people of school age have been tuned in to sounds invented not by composers approved by adults but in to sounds invented by their own near contemporaries, sounds associated with lyrics, manners and dress that they also identify as their own. David Amram, the New York Philharmonic's first resident composer, is understandably optimistic that this kind of identification will develop an avidity of attention to music that could be the salvation of American musical composition and performance. Perhaps in some such way the popular arts can help restore all the arts to their status as entertainment.

To help this process along it isn't necessary that literary and academic grown-ups go to school to their children. Rather, they must begin to ask some childlike and therefore some extremely difficult questions about particular works: Is this any fun? How and where is it any fun? And if it isn't why bother? While listening together to recordings of popular music, people of any age tend naturally to ask these questions, and I've heard them asked by young people with an eager precision which they almost never exhibit, for want of academic encouragement, when they talk about a poem or a story. Their writing about this music isn't as good as their talk, at least in the magazines I've been able to get hold of, like *Vibrations, The Broadside* and, perhaps the best, *Crawdaddy.* In written criticism they display some of the adult vices, including at times a nearly Germanic fondness for categorization: the Mersey beat, the raving style, trip songs, the San Francisco school, the love sound, folk-rock and the rock-folk-pop tradition are typical of the terms that get bandied about with desperate and charming hope. Reviews of popular music in the major newspapers and magazines are much worse, however, and before the Sgt. Pepper album practically no space even for an intelligent note was given the Beatles in any of them. Now that they've begun to appear, any adult easily victimized by a reputed generational gap need only read reviews of *Sgt. Pepper* in the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* by Richard Goldstein to discover that youth is no guarantee of understanding. In his early twenties, he is already an ancient. Some of his questions — does the album have any real unity? — were not necessary even when originally asked

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some two thousand years ago, while others are a bad dream of Brooks and Warren: the "lyrical technique" of "She's Leaving Home" is "uninspired narrative, with a dearth of poetic irony." The song is in fact one of *Sgt. Pepper*'s satirically funniest cuts, though someone Goldstein's age mightn't as easily see this as someone older. Recognition of its special blend of period sentimentality and elegance of wit is conferred upon the listener not by his being chronologically young but by his having once lived with that especially English blend of tones from Beatrice Lillie or Noel Coward, and their wistful play about the genteel.

Nearly all the songs on the Sgt. Pepper album and the two singles released here since then — "All You Need Is Love" and "Baby You're a Rich Man" — are in fact quite broadly allusive: to the blues, to jazz hits of the thirties and forties, to classical music, early rock and roll, previous cuts by the Beatles themselves. Much of the comedy in these songs and much of their historical resonance, as in the stately Wagnerian episode in "A Day In the Life," is managed in this way. Mixing of styles and tones remind the listener that one kind of feeling about a subject isn't enough and that any single induced feeling must often exist within the context of seemingly contradictory alternatives. Most good groups offer something of this kind, like the Who, with the brilliant drummer Keith Moon. In songs like "Don't Look Away" and "So Sad About Us," Moon, working with the composer-guitarist Pete Townsend, calls forth a complicated response in a manner nicely described in *Crawdaddy* by Jon Landau, one of the best of the reviewers I've read: "Townsend scratches his chorus, muffles his strings, or lets the chord stand out full depending on what Moon is doing — the result being a perfectly unified guitar–drum sound that can't help but make you feel happy even while the lyrics tell you to feel sad." The Beatles have often in the past worked for similar mixtures, but they now offer an additional nuance: especially in later songs, one of the interwoven strands is likely to be an echo of some familiar, probably clichéd musical, verbal or dramatic formula. These echoes, like the soap-opera background music of "She's Leaving Home" or the jaunty music-hall tones of "When I'm Sixty-four," have the enriching effect that allusiveness can have in poetry: of expanding a situation toward the simultaneous condition of pathos, because the situation is seen as recurrent and therefore possibly in-

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soluble, and comic, because the recurrence has finally passed into cliché.

Any close listening to musical groups soon establishes the fact that as composers and performers the Beatles repay attention altogether more than does any other group, American or English. They offer something for nearly everyone and respond to almost any kind of interest. The Rolling Stones, the Left Banke and the Bee Gees are especially good, but in none of these is there an inventive productivity equal to that of Lennon, McCartney or their producer George Martin, whose contributions of electronic and orchestral notation really make him one of the group, particularly now that their performances are to be exclusively in studio. Only Dylan shows something equivalent to the Beatles in his combination of talents as composer, lyricist and performer. In performance the Beatles exhibit a nearly total theatrical power. It is a power so unencumbered and so freely diverse both for the group and for each of its members that it creates an element of suspense in whatever they do, an expectation that this time there really will be a failure of good taste — that attribute shared by only the greatest theatrical performers. They never wholly lose themselves in anyone else's styling, however, or in their own exuberance; they never succumb to the excitements they generate, much less those of their audience. It's unthinkable that they would lend themselves for the rock and wreck sequence of the Yardbirds in Antonioni's *Blow-up*. That particular performance, quite aside from what it contributed to a brilliant film, is a symptom of the infiltration even into popular music of the decadence by which entertainment is being displaced by a self-abasing enactment of what is implicit in the *form* of entertainment — in this instance, of group playing that gives way to animosities and a destructive retaliation against recalcitrant instrumental support. When the Beatles sound as if they are heading orchestrally into self-obliterating noise, it is very often only that they may assert their presence vocally in quite the opposite direction: by contrasting choirboy cooing, by filigrees of voice-play coming from each of them, as in the reprise of "Sgt. Pepper," for instance, or, as in "Lovely Rita," the little choral oo's and gaspings — all of these suggesting, in their relation to solo, crosscurrents of feeling within an agreed area of play. Manners so instinctively free and yet so harmonious could not be guided from outside, either by an audience or even by directorial

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guidance, however much the latter did help in rescuing them from the tawdry enslavement to Elvis Presley, an otherwise profitable influence, in their first, fortunately hard-to-find recording of 1961 made in Hamburg with Ringo's predecessor at the drums, Peter Best.

As is the taste of all great performers — in athletics, in politics, in any of the arts — the taste of the Beatles or of Dylan is an emanation of personality, of a self that is the generous master but never the creature of its audience. Taste in such instances is inseparable from a stubbornness of selfhood, and it doesn't matter that the self has been invented for the theater. Any self is invented as soon as any purpose is conceived. But the Beatles are a special case in not being *a* self at all. They are a group, and the unmistakeable group identity exists almost in spite of sharp individuation, each of them, except the invisible Martin, known to be unique in some shaggy way. There are few other groups in which even one or two of the members are as publicly recognizable as any of the Beatles, and this can't be explained as a difference simply in public relations. It is precisely this unusual individuation which explains, I think, why the Beatles are so much stronger than any other group and why they don't need, like the Who, to play at animosities on stage. The pretense doesn't communicate the presence of individual Who but rather an anxiety at their not instinctively feeling like individuals when they are together. The Beatles, on the other hand, enhance the individuality of one another by the sheer elaborateness by which they arrive at a cohesive sound and by a musical awareness of one another that isn't distinguishable from the multiple directions allowed in the attainment of harmony. Like members of a great athletic team, like such partners in dance as Nureyev and Fonteyn or like some jazz combos, the Beatles in performance seem to draw their aspirations and their energy not from the audience but from one another. Their close, loyal and affectionate personal ties are of course not irrelevant.

The incentive for what they accomplish seems to be sequestered among them, a tensed responsiveness that encourages from Harrison, as in "And Your Bird Can Sing," what sounds like the best guitar playing in the world and which provokes the immense productivity of Lennon and McCartney. The amount they have composed might be explained by commercial venture but not the daring and originality of each new single or album. Of course the promise of "new

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sounds" is itself a commercial necessity in their business, as the anxieties of the second album of the Jefferson Airplane indicate, but the Beatles will soon release their fourteenth, and it's not merely "new sounds" that they produce, an easy enough matter with orchestral support, electronics and Asiatic importations. They produce different styles, different musical conceptions and revisions of sentiment that give an unprecedented variety to an artistic career that had its proper beginning a mere four or five years ago. The freshness of each effort is often so radically different from the one before, as any comparison among *Rubber Soul, Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper* will indicate, as to constitute risk rather than financial ambition — especially three such albums, along with a collection of earlier songs, *Yesterday and Today,* in a period just over eighteen months. They are the ones who get tired of the sounds they have made, and the testings and teasings that produce each new album are self-inflicted. If they are careerist it is in the manner not of Judy Garland, reminding us in each concert of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and the pains of show biz, but of John Coltrane who, when he died in July at forty, was also about to give up performance in public altogether, even though his reputation as one of the most influential musicians in jazz and its greatest saxophonist guaranteed him an increasingly profitable concert career. His interest in music was a continually exploratory one, an effort to broaden the possibilities, as the Beatles do now in studio, of his music and his instruments. Like Harrison with his guitar, he managed with the soprano sax to produce a nearly oriental sound, and this discovery led him to an interest in Indian music much as Harrison was led to the study of the sitar. And again like the Beatles, Coltrane's experimentation was the more intense because he and his sidemen, Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner, achieved a remarkable degree of liberating, energizing empathy. Almost all such champions are extraordinary and private men who work with an audience, as the phrase goes, only when that audience is composed of the few who can perform with them. Otherwise, the audience is what it ought to be: not participants but witnesses or only listeners to a performance. The audience that in the theme song of *Sgt. Pepper* is so "lovely" that "we'd like to take you home with us" is a wholly imaginary one, especially on a record contrived as an escape from public performance.

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Aloof from politics, their topicality is of music, the sentiments and the social predicaments traditional to folk songs, and ballads. Maybe the most important service of the Beatles and similar groups is the restoration to good standing of the simplicities that have frightened us into irony and the search for irony; they locate the beauty and pathos of commonplace feelings even while they work havoc with fashionable or tiresome expressions of those feelings. A particularly brilliant example is the record, released some weeks after the Sgt. Pepper album, with "Baby You're a Rich Man" on one side and "All You Need Is Love" on the other. "Baby You're a Rich Man" opens with an inquiry addressed by McCartney and Harrison to Lennon, who can be said to represent here a starry-eyed fan's version of the Beatles themselves: "How does it feel to be / One of the beautiful people?" This and subsequent questions are asked of the "rich man" in a reverentially high but devastatingly lilting voice, to the accompaniment of bursts of sitar music and the clip-clopping of Indian song. The sitar, an instrument Harrison studied in India for six weeks with the renowned Ravi Shankar ("George," he reported, "was truly humble") here suggests not the India of "Within You, Without You" evoked on the Sgt. Pepper album, the India of the Bhagavad Gita. It is rather another India, of fabulous riches, the India of the British and their Maharajahs, a place for exotic travel, but also for josh sticks and the otherworldliness of a "trip." All these possibilities are at work in the interplay of music and lyrics. Contributing to the merely social and satiric implications of the song, the Indian sounds operate in the manner of classical allusion in Pope: they expand to the ridiculous the cant of jet-set, international gossip columns — "one of the beautiful people" or "baby, you're a rich man now," or "how often have you been there?" But, as in Pope, the instrument of ridicule here, the sitar, is allowed in the very process to remain unsullied and eloquent. The social implications of the song carry more than a hint of self-parody since the comic mixtures of verbal and musical phrasing refer us to similar mixtures that are a result of the Beatles' fantastic fortune: Liverpool boys, still in their twenties, once relatively poor and now enormously rich, once socially nowhere and now internationally "there," once close to home both in fact and in their music but now implicated not only in the Mersey beat but in the Ganges sound, in travel to India and "trips" of a kind for which India set the precedent for centuries.

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Most remarkably, the song doesn't sort out its social satire from its implicitly positive treatment of drugs. Bob Dylan often puns with roughly the same intention, as in "Rainy Day Woman ♯12 & 35," a simple but effective example:

> *Well, they'll stone you when you're trying to be so good,*
> *They'll stone you just like they said they would.*
> *They'll stone you when you try to go home,*
> *Then they'll stone you when you're there all alone.*
> *But I would not feel so all alone:*
> *Everybody must get stoned.*

In the Beatles' song, the very same phrases that belong to the platitudes of the "beautiful people" belong also, with favorable connotations, to the drug scene. The question, "And have you travelled very far?" is answered by Lennon, the "beautiful" person, with what socially would be a comfortable cliché: "Far as the eye can see." But the phrase is really too outmoded for the jet age and thus sends us back to the original question and to the possibility that the "travel" can refer to a "trip" on LSD, the destination of which would indeed be "as far as the eye can see." Most of the lyrics operate in this double way, both as social satire and drug talk: "How often have you been there? / Often enough to know," or "What did you see when you were there? / Nothing that doesn't show" or "Some do it naturally" (presumably an acidhead by nature) to which the answer is "Happy to be that way." The song could pass simply as social satire, though to see that and that only is also to be the object of satire, of not knowing what implications are carried even by the language you make fun of for its imprecisions. The point, and it's one that I'll come back to, is that the argot of LSD isn't much different from the banalities of question and answer between a "beautiful" person and his bedazzled interviewer. The punning genius of Lennon is evident here perhaps more effectively than in his two books, *In My Own Write* and *A Spaniard in the Works,* with their affinities to Edward Lear as well as to the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake.*

The Beatles won't be stuck even within their most intricate contrivances, however, and they escape often by reminding us and themselves that they are singers and not pushers, performers and not propagandists. The moment occurs in "Baby You're a Rich Man," as it does in other songs, near the end, in the question "Now that you've found another key / What are you going to play?" Necessarily

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the question refers us to their music while at the same time alluding to the promised results of drugs — a new "key" to personality, to a role as well as to the notes that one might "play." Similar uses of words that can allude both to the subject of the moment and to their constant subject, musical creation, occur in "All You Need Is Love" ("Nothing you can sing that can't be sung"), with implications we'll get to in a moment, and in the second song on the Sgt. Pepper album, "A Little Help From My Friends." Sung by Ringo the "help" refers most simply to affection when there is no one around to love and it also means pot supplied by a friend. However, at the beginning of the song it explicitly means the assistance the others will give Ringo with his singing, while the phrases "out of tune" and "out of key" suggest, in the broadest sense, that the number, like the whole occasion, is in the mode not of the Beatles but of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band: "What would you think if I sang out of tune, / Would you stand up and walk out on me. / Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song, / And I'll try not to sing out of key. / Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends, / Mmmm, I get high with a little help from my friends, / Mmmm, going to try with a little help from my friends, . . ."

One of the Beatles' most appealing qualities is their tendency more to self-parody than to parody of others. The two are of course very close for performers who empathize with all the characters in their songs and whose most conspicuous moments of self-parody occur when they're emulating someone whose style they'd like to master. At such moments their boyishness really does shine forth as a musical virtue: giving themselves almost wholly to an imitation of some performer they admire, their necessary exaggeration of his style makes fun of no one so much as themselves. It's a matter of trying on a style and then — as if embarrassed by their own riches, by a self-confident knowledge that no style, not even one of their own invention, is more than a temporary exercise of strength — of laughing themselves out of imitation. Listen to the extravagant rendering on *Beatles '65* of Chuck Berry in "Rock and Roll Music" or their many early emulations of Presley, whose importance to their development is everywhere apparent, or the mimicry of Western music in "Act Naturally" on one of their very best albums, *Yesterday and Today*, or the McCartney imitation of Little Richard singing "Long Tall Sally"

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on the *Beatles Second Album*. It's all cowboys and Indians by people who have a lot of other games they want to play and who know very well where home is and when to go there. Parody and self–parody is frequent among the other groups in the form of persistent stylization, but its object is almost always some clichéd sentiment or situation. Parody from the Beatles tends usually, and increasingly, to be directed toward musical tradition and their own musical efforts. This is at least one reason why "All You Need Is Love," recorded on the reverse side of "Baby You're a Rich Man," is one of the most important they have ever done, an indication, along with the Sgt. Pepper album, of so sophisticated an awareness of their historical achievements in music as to make it seem unlikely that they can continue much longer without still further changes of direction even more radical than their decision not to perform henceforth for live audiences. "All You Need Is Love" is decisive evidence that when the Beatles think about anything they think musically and that musical thinking dictates their response to other things: to "love," in this instance, to drugs and social manners in "Baby You're a Rich Man Now" and throughout the Sgt. Pepper album.

I doubt that any of these subjects would in itself prove a sufficient sustenance for their musical invention until first called forth and then kindled by some musical idea. At this point in their career it is impossible, given their and George Martin's musical knowledge and sophistication, that the title "All You Need Is Love" should mean what it would mean coming from any other group, namely hippie or flower love. Expectations of complications are satisfied from the outset: the repetition, three times and in a languorous tone, of the phrase "love, love, love" might remind us of the song of the aging Chaplin in *Limelight,* a song in which he keeps repeating the word throughout with a pitiable and insistent rapidity. Musical subterfuge of lyric simplicity occurs again when the title line, "all you need is love," picks up a musical trailer out of the thirties ballroom. The historical frequency of the "need" for love is thus proposed by the music, and it is as if this proposition emboldens the lyrics: "Nothing you can do that can't be done," "nothing you can sing that can't be sung," "nothing you can know that can't be known," "nothing you can see that can't be shown—it's easy" — this is a sample of equally ambiguous assertions that constitute the verbal substance of the song,

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even while the word "love" is being stretched out in choral background. And like the ambiguous language of "Baby You're a Rich Man," the phrasing here sounds comfortably familiar — if you had love you could do anything. Except that isn't really what the lyrics imply. Rather, the suggestion is that doing, singing, knowing, seeing have in some sense already been done or at least that we needn't be in any particular sweat about them; they're accepted as already within the accustomed range of human possibility. What has not been demonstrated to anyone's satisfaction, what hasn't been tried, is "love." "Love" remains the great unfulfilled need, and the historical evidence for this is in endless musical compositions about it. Far from suggesting that "love" will solve everything, which would be the hippie reading of "all you need is love," the song allows most things to be solved without it. Such a nice bit of discrimination issues from the music and thence into the lyrics. Interestingly enough, the lyrics were meant to be simple in deference to the largely non–English-speaking audience for whom the song was especially written and performed on the BBC worldwide TV production of "Our World." "Normally," the Beatles' song publisher Richard James later observed, "the Beatles like to write sophisticated material, but they were glad to have the opportunity to write something with a very basic appeal." But so was Shakespeare at the Globe, and we know how unsophisticated *he* could be. The simplicity is entirely in the initial repetitions of title line and the word "love," a verbal simplicity first modified by the music and then turned into complications that have escaped even most English-speaking listeners.

Lennon and McCartney's recognition through music that the "need" for love is historical and recurrent is communicated to the listener by instrumental and vocal allusions to earlier material. The historical allusiveness is at the outset smart-alecky — the song opens with the French National Anthem — passes through the Chaplin echo, if that's what it is, to various echoes of the blues, and boogie-woogie, all of them in the mere shadings of background, until at the end the song itself seems to be swept up and dispersed within the musical history of which it is a part and of the electronics by which that history has been made available. The process begins by a recurrence of the "love, love, love" phrase, here repeated and doubled as on a stalled record. It then proceeds into a medley of sounds, frac-

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tured, mingled musical phrases drifting into a blur which my friend Paul Bertram pointed out to me is like the sounds of a radio at night fading and drifting among the signals of different stations. We can make out fragments of old love songs condemned to wander through the airways for all time: "Green Sleeves," a burst of trumpet sound I can't identify, a hit of the thirties called "In the Mood," a ghostly "love you, yeah, yeah, yeah" of "She Loves You" from the *Beatles Second Album* of 1964 and, in the context of "All You Need Is Love," a pathetic "all together now . . . everybody!" of the old community sing. Far from being in any way satiric, the song gathers into itself the musical expression of the "need" for love as it has accumulated through decades of popular music.

This historical feeling for music, including their own musical creations, explains, I think, the Beatles' fascination with the invented aspects of everything around them, the participatory tenderness and joy with which they respond to styles and artifact, the maturity with which they have come to see the coloring of the human and social landscape of contemporary England. It's as if they naturally see the world in the form of *son et lumière*: as they say in a beautiful neighborhood song about Liverpool, "Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes." Not everyone their age is capable of seeing the odd wonder of a meter maid — after all, a meter maid's a meter maid; fewer still would be moved to a song of praise like "Lovely Rita" ("When it gets dark I tow your heart away"); and only a Beatle could be expected, when seeing her with a bag across her shoulder, to have the historically enlivened vision that "made her look a little like a military man." Now of course English boys out of Liverpool can be expected, it says here, to be more intimate than American boys from San Francisco with the residual social and cultural evidences from World War II and even from the First World War. In response to these and other traces of the past, however, the Beatles display an absolutely unique kind of involvement. It isn't simply that they have an instinctive nostalgia for period styles, as in "She's Leaving Home" or "When I'm Sixty-four," or that they absorb the past through the media of the popular arts, through music, cinema, theatrical conventions, bands like Sgt. Pepper's or music-hall performers. Everyone to some extent apprehends the world in the shapes given it by the popular arts and its media; we all see even the things that are new

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to us through that gridiron of style that Harold Rosenberg imagines as a debilitating shield in front of the British Redcoats even as they first entered the American terrain. No, the Beatles have the distinction in their work both of *knowing* that this is how they see and feel things and of enjoying the knowledge. It could be said that they know what Beckett and Borges know but without any loss of simple enthusiasm or innocent expectation, and without any patronization of those who do not know. In the loving phrases of "Penny Lane," "A pretty nurse is selling poppies from a tray / And tho' she feels as if she's in a play, / She is anyway."

It isn't surprising that drugs have become important to their music, that they are leading an effort in England for the legalization of marijuana, partly as a result of the conviction and sentencing on drug charges of two of the Rolling Stones, and that in response to questions, Lennon, McCartney and Harrison have let it be known that they've taken LSD. At least four of the songs on the Sgt. Pepper album are concerned with taking a "trip" or "turning on": "A Little Help from My Friends," "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "Fixing a Hole" and "A Day in the Life," with a good chance of a fifth in "Getting Better." Throughout the album, the consciousness of the *dramatis personae* in the songs is directed more or less by inventions of media or of the popular arts, and drugs are proposed as one kind of personal escape into the freedom of some further invention all on one's own. Inventing the world out of the mind with drugs is more physically risky than doing it by writing songs, films or wearing costumes, but danger isn't what the songs offer for consideration, and it's in any case up to the Beatles alone to decide what they want for their minds and bodies. Instead, the songs propose, quite delightfully and reasonably, that the vision of the world while on a "trip" or under the influence of a drug isn't necessarily wilder than a vision of the world through which we travel under the influence of the arts or the news media. Thus, the third song on the album, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," proposes that the listener can "picture" a "trip" scene without taking such a "trip" himself. Here, as in "Baby You're a Rich Man," the experience of a "trip" is wittily superimposed on the experience of ordinary travel: "Picture yourself on a train in a station, / With plasticine porters with looking glass ties, / Suddenly someone is there at the turnstile, / The girl with kaleidoscope

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eyes." Of course the images could come as easily from Edward Lear as from the experience of drugs, and Lennon has claimed that the title of the song is not an anagram for LSD but was taken from a drawing his son did at school. Lennon, the author of two books of Joycean punning, knows to the point of hilarity that one meaning denies the presence of another, which it has hidden inside, only to all strangers and the police. Still his reticence is obviously a form of the truth. The Beatles won't be reduced to drugs when they mean, intend and enact so much more. "Acid," Harrison told the Los Angeles *Free Press* in August, "is not the answer, definitely not the answer. It's enabled people to see a little bit more, but when you really get hip, you don't need it." Later, to Hunter Davies of the London *Sunday Times,* McCartney announced that they'd given up drugs. "It was an experience we went through and now it's over we don't need it any more. We think we're finding other ways of getting there." In this effort they're apparently being helped by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Indian founder of the International Meditation Society, though even on the way to their initiation in Bangor, North Wales, Lennon wondered if the experience wasn't simply going to be another version of what they already knew: "You know, like some are EMI and some Decca, but it's really still records."

The notion that we "picture" ourselves much of the time anyway without even willing it, that we see ourselves and the world in exotic images usually invented by someone else, is suggested throughout the Sgt. Pepper album, even on the cover, with its clustered photographs of world-shaping "stars" of all kinds. In "A Day in the Life," the last song and a work of great power and historical grasp, the hapless man whose role is sung by McCartney wants to "turn on" himself and his lover — maybe us too — as a relief from the multiple controls exerted over life and the imagination by various and competing media. The sad little "oh boy" interjected by McCartney's sweet, vulnerable voice into orchestral movements of intimidating, sometimes portentous momentum, expresses wonderfully how the victim is further confounded by the fact that these controls often impose themselves under the guise of entertainment:

I read the news today oh boy
About a lucky man who made the grade
And though the news was rather sad

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Well I just had to laugh
I saw the photograph.
He blew his mind out in a car
He didn't notice that the lights had changed
A crowd of people stood and stared
They'd seen his face before
Nobody was really sure
If he was from the House of Lords.
I saw a film today oh boy
The English Army had just won the war
A crowd of people turned away
But I just had to look
Having read the book.
I'd love to turn you on. . . .

The news in the paper is "rather sad" but the photograph is funny, so how does one respond to the suicide; suicide is a violent repudiation of the self but it mightn't have happened if the man had followed the orders of the traffic lights; the victim isn't so much a man anyway as a face people have seen someplace in the news, in photographs or possibly even on film; and while a film of the English army winning the war is too dated for most people to look at, and maybe they don't believe in the victory anyway, the man in the song has to look at it (oh boy — a film) because he has read a book about it and therefore it does have some reality for him. "Turning on" is at least a way of escaping submission to the media designed to turn on the mind from the outside — quite appropriately the song was banned on the BBC — and loving to turn "you" on, either a lover or you, the listener, is an effort to escape the horror of loneliness projected by the final images of the song:

I read the news today oh boy
Four thousand holes in Blackburn
Lancashire
And though the holes were rather small
They had to count them all
Now they know how many holes it takes
To fill the Albert Hall.
I'd love to turn you on.

The audience in Albert Hall — the same as the "lovely audience" in the first song that the Beatles would like to "take home" with them? — are only so many holes: unfilled and therefore unfertile holes, of the earth and therefore holes of decomposition, gathered together but

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separate and therefore countable, utterly and inarticulately alone. Is this merely a bit of visionary ghoulishness, something seen on a "trip?" No, good citizens can find it, like everything else in the song, in the daily news — of how Scotland Yard searched for buried bodies on a moor by making holes in the earth with poles and then waiting for the stench of decomposing flesh.

Lennon and McCartney in their songs seem as vulnerable as the man in "A Day in the Life" to the sights and sounds by which different media shape and then reshape reality, but their response isn't in any way as intimidated, and "turning on" isn't their only recourse. They can also tune in and play the game, sometimes to show, as in "A Day in the Life," how one shaped view of reality can be mocked out of existence by crossing it with another. They mix their media the way they mix musical sounds or cross lyrics of one tone with music of quite another — with a vengeance. It's unwise ever to assume that they're doing only one thing or expressing themselves in only one style. "She's Leaving Home" does have a persistent cello background to evoke genteel melodrama of an earlier decade, and "When I'm Sixty-four" is intentionally clichéd throughout both in its ragtime rhythm and in its lyrics. The result is a satiric heightening of the love-nest sentimentality of old popular songs in the mode of "He'll build a little home / Just meant for two / From which I'll never roam / Who would, would you?" The home in "When I'm Sixty-four" is slightly larger to accommodate children, but that's the only important difference: "Every summer we can rent a cottage / In the Isle of Wight, if it's not too dear / We shall scrimp and save / Grandchildren on your knee / Vera Chuck & Dave." But the Beatles aren't satisfied merely with having written a brilliant spoof, with scoring, on their own authority, off death-dealing clichés. Instead, they quite suddenly at the end transform one cliché (of sentimental domesticity) into another (of a lonely-hearts newspaper advertisement) thereby proposing a vulgar contemporary medium suitable to the cheap and public sentiments that once passed for nice, private and decent: "Send me a postcard, drop me a line, / Stating point of view / Indicate precisely what you mean to say / Yours sincerely, wasting away / Give me your answer, fill in a form / Mine for evermore / Will you still need me, will you still feed me. / When I'm sixty-four."

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The Sgt. Pepper album and the singles released here just before and after it — "Penny Lane," "Strawberry Fields Forever," "All You Need Is Love" and "Baby You're a Rich Man" — constitute the Beatles' most audacious musical effort so far, works of such achieved ambitiousness as to give an entirely new retrospective shape to their whole career. Nothing less is being claimed by these songs than that the Beatles now exist not merely as a phenomenon of entertainment but as a force of historical consequence. They have placed themselves within a musical, social and historical environment more monumental in its surroundings and more significantly populated than was the environment of any of their early songs. Listening to the Sgt. Pepper album one thinks not simply of the history of popular music but of the history of this century. It doesn't matter that some of the songs were composed before it occurred to the Beatles to use the motif of Sgt. Pepper, with its historical overtones; the songs emanated from some inwardly felt coherence that awaited a merely explicit design, and they would ask to be heard together even without the design.

Under the aegis of an old-time concert given by the type of music-hall band with which Lennon's father, Alfred, claims to have been associated, the songs, directly or by chance images, offer something like a review of contemporary English life, saved from folksong generality by having each song resemble a dramatic monologue. The review begins with the Sgt. Pepper theme song, followed immediately by "A Little Help From My Friends": Ringo, helped by the other Beatles, will, as I've already mentioned, try not to sing out of "key," try, that is, to fit into a style still heard in England but very much out of date. Between this and the reprise of Sgt. Pepper, which would be the natural end of the album, are ten songs, and while some are period pieces, about hangovers from the past, as is the band itself, no effort is made at any sort of historical chronology. Their arrangement is apparently haphazard, suggesting how the hippie and the historically pretentious, the genteel and the mod, the impoverished and the exotic, the Indian influence and the influence of technology are inextricably entangled into what is England. As I probably shouldn't say again, the Beatles never for long wholly submerge themselves in any form or style, so that at the end of the Indian, meditative sonorities of "Within You, Without You" the burst of laughter can be taken to mean — look, we have come through, an assurance

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from the Beatles (if it *is* their laughter and not the response of technicians left in as an example of how "straights" might react) that they are still Beatles, Liverpool boys still there on the far side of a demanding foreign experience. This characteristic release of themselves from history and back to their own proper time and place occurs with respect to the design of the whole album in a most poignant way. Right after the reprise of the Sgt. Pepper song, with no interval and picking up the beat of the Sgt. Pepper theme, an "extra" song, perhaps the most brilliant ever written by Lennon and McCartney, breaks out of the theatrical frame and enters "a day in the life," into the way we live now. It projects a degree of loneliness not to be managed within the conventions of Sgt. Peppers' Lonely Hearts Club Band. Released from the controls of Sgt. Pepper, the song exposes the horrors of more contemporary and less benign controls, and it is from these that the song proposes the necessity of still further release. It does so in musical sounds meant to convey a "trip" out, sounds of ascending-airplane velocity and crescendo that occur right after the first "I'd love to turn you on," at midpoint in the song, and after the final, plaintive repetition of the line at the end, when the airplane sounds give way to a sustained orchestral chord that drifts softly and slowly toward infinity and silence. It is, as I've suggested, a song of wasteland, and the concluding "I'd love to turn you on" has as much propriety to the fragmented life that precedes it in the song and in the whole work as does the "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih" to the fragments of Eliot's poem. Eliot can be remembered here for still other reasons: not only because he pays conspicuous respect to the music hall but because his poems, like the Beatles' songs, work for a kaleidoscopic effect, for fragmented patterns of sound that can bring historic masses into juxtaposition only to let them be fractured by other emerging and equally evocative fragments.

Eliot is not among the sixty-two faces and figures, all unnamed and in some cases probably quite obscure, gathered round the Beatles on the cover, a pictorial extension of the collage effect which is so significant to the music. In making the selection, the Beatles were understandably drawn to figures who promote the idea of other possible worlds or who offer literary and cinematic trips to exotic places: Poe, Oscar Wilde, H. G. Wells, along with Marx, Jung, Lawrence of Arabia and Johnny Weismuller. They are also partial to the kind

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of theatrical person whose full being is the theatrical self, like W. C. Fields, Tom Mix, Brando and Mae West, who has delightfully adapted such Beatle songs as "Day Tripper" to her own style. Above all, the cover is a celebration of the Beatles themselves who can now be placed (and Bob Dylan, too) within a group who have, aside from everything else, infused the imagination of the living with the possibilities of other ways of living, of extraordinary existences, of something beyond "a day in the life." So it is indeed like a funeral for the Beatles, except that they'd be no more "dead" than anyone else in attendance. There they are in the center, mustachioed and in the brassed and tassled silk of the old-time bands, and, with brilliant, quite funny implications, they are also represented in the collage as wax figures by Madame Tussaud, clothed in business suits. Live Beatles in costumes from the past and effigies of the Beatles in the garb of the present, with the name of the Beatles in flowers planted before the whole group — this bit of slyness is of a piece with not sorting out past and present and promised future in the order of the songs, or the mixed allusiveness to period styles, including earlier Beatles' styles or the mixing and confoundings of media in songs like "When I'm Sixty-four" or "A Day in the Life." The cover suggests that the Beatles to some extent live the past in the present, live in the shadows of their own as well as of other people's past accomplishments, and that among the imaginative creations that fascinate them most, the figures closest at hand on the cover, are their own past selves. "And the time will come," it is promised in one of their songs, "when you will see we're all one, and life flows on within you and without you." As an apprehension of artistic, and perhaps of any other kind of placement within living endeavor, this idea is allowable only to the very great.

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POEMS

AN EMBROIDERY

Rose Red's hair is brown as fur
and shines in firelight as she prepares
supper of honey and apples, curds and whey,
for the bear, and leaves it ready
on the hearth-stone.

Rose White's grey eyes
look into the dark forest.

Rose Red's cheeks are burning,
sign of her ardent, joyful
compassionate heart.
Rose White is pale,
turning away when she hears
the bear's paw on the latch.

When he enters, there is
frost on his fur,
he draws near to the fire
giving off sparks.
Rose White catches the scent of the forest,
of mushrooms, of rosin.

Together Rose Red and Rose White
sing to the bear;
it is a cradle song, a loom song,
a song about marriage, about

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a pilgrimage to the mountains
long ago.
Raised on an elbow,
the bear stretched on the hearth
nods and hums; soon he sighs
and puts down his head.

He sleeps; the Roses
bank the fire.
Sunk in the clouds of their feather bed
they prepare to dream.

Rose Red in a cave that smells of honey
dreams she is combing the fur of her cubs
with a golden comb.
Rose White is lying awake.

Rose White shall marry the bear's brother.
Shall he too
when the time is ripe,
step from the bear's hide?
Is that other, her bridegroom,
here in the room?

Denise Levertov

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autobiography

later on i learned it was a friday
when i'd torn loose, screaming,
from my coffin, from my mother.

between the deception of my birth,
sealed with oil & water & salt,
and the death bred into my bones,

in the endless ages between friday
and black friday, they stuck pins in my arms,
i was baptized and drafted, the sweet

smell of power made it look nice.
once a year the snow would be changed.
i wore a new shroud every day.

also i observed the four quarters of the sky.
my words drifted off on some kind of wind.
success never burned me, nor fire.

most evenings my liver feels as hard as a rock,
and when it's friday again, i hear screaming,
my own voice screaming in a white shroud,

over dreary ages, from the day of my birth.
i feel awful, i go to sleep thinking:
well i'm out of it. there'll be some other

war, some other dead dog (not me)
will get launched at the moon, and space
as it buries him, will be aghast and start screaming.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

(Translated by Jerome Rothenberg)

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ASPEN I

We go to green things: cold
pool where the glacier was,
grabbed with claws like the
grizzly down raw shale or granite. That
water's green now, so
broken in its depths by
rift and crag we look down see
hair rising long
strands how they shift not
knot or tangle like
arms we'd swim to so be held
if we liked that cold.
Or
take another green like
scarves on our arms those
dark pine woods we climbed twelve thousand up by
jeep to come to.
Just hillock off while
friends found wildflowers we
eyes up off frail things off
curls stems leaves stood in
fall of fir and pine.
A deer's foot had found this
hollow, she'd stood so, this
bark dragged at her flesh.
Yet we
come back from all
grottoes where rocks, water, all
green, are fish, deer's realm, all
strange, going beyond us, where we

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prow to the topland, hulk too
big scared loud too fleshed to
find its ease given so
easily to other creatures.

Down on the valleyfloor though
green's still in our dreamseye we
feel its absence look
forage out with
shears
cut break off wreck bushes haul in
leaves stems old dry crests of poppies
wash off the green bugs fill jars bottles
crowd each tabletop corner break of wall or
shelter, with
this great green
we come back to.

Eleanor C. Munro

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William Phillips

WRITING ABOUT SEX

Since sex is older than literature, one would think it is entitled to more respect. But the relation has always been just the reverse; literature has always been protected against the encroachments of sex. Even now, when it would seem that almost anything goes, a number of serious critics have been alarmed by the lack of sexual restraint in literature, which they regard as a symptom of moral decline. Most of their fire is directed at figures like Genet, Burroughs and Mailer, though they are generally upset by the moral tone of contemporary writing as a whole.

Now we need hardly be reminded that what goes by the name of the moral question is an old and recurrent one, popping up with almost every new generation, as new sensibilities and new attitudes about the limits of literature come up against old ones. Today the split is wider, though the old values are frequently being defended by more sophisticated people, who themselves were brought up on the idea that art made its own rules. This means only that the confusion is on a higher level. The new values, on the other hand, are supported by people who make a principle of going out of bounds in every possible way — in morals, in sex, in art. Much of the new writing represents not so much a break with an existing tradition as with the very idea of tradition, while those who are holding the line against the so-called new barbarians claim they are defending not some philistine standards but literature itself, and some even go so far as to insist they are protecting the very basis of civilization. Those who feel themselves responsible for the health of art and society have been warning us that what we have is a free-for-all and not the normal kind of experiment and innovation prescribed for progress in the arts.

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As things shape up, there seems to be some conflict between the idea of freedom and the idea of civilization — which is nothing new to those who know their Freud and have followed the diversions of Norman O. Brown and his less theoretical cothinkers. Until recently, however, anyone claiming to be advanced had to be for both freedom *and* civilization, though naturally the emphasis varied and there was usually a good deal of vagueness when it came to defining just what one meant and how it applied to art. Now things have changed: freedom literally means going all the way, turning everything on; but civilization today is actually regarded with a certain amount of irony and skepticism, particularly by those who have an adventurous attitude to life and to art, and, of course, by those who think of civilization as a synonym for a corrupt and dying system.

This, I think, is roughly the way the lines are drawn at present. In literature sex is often the issue, though other moral questions are involved. But when we try to examine more exactly what people are for and where certain works stand the picture is not so clear. In some contemporary writing commercial motives have gotten mixed up with what might have been a normal extension of the frontiers of sex and morality. Also different kinds of sex and different uses of them for literary or ideological — or commercial — purposes are not always distinct and they tend to be lumped together under the heading of the new. On the other side of the fence, the guardians of civilized art are hard to pin down, once we get beyond the generalities on which most of us are bound to agree. Often, you can't tell whether they are objecting to violations of current morality, or of current taste, whether there is too much sex, or it is too detailed or too eccentric — in short, whether the objections are literary, or moral, or ideological or just squeamish.

Usually the case against the new sexuality is not made too explicit. But two recent pieces by George P. Elliott (*Harpers*, March, 1965) and George Steiner (*Encounter,* October, 1965) do take fairly clear stands. Both Elliott and Steiner claim to be talking mainly about pornography, though they are really talking about sex and its moral and aesthetic limits in literature, and about moral values in general. At bottom, Elliott's position is that too much sex is bad not only for literature but for society. At first he argues that to keep a safe distance from sex, as from other bodily functions, is simply a matter of good

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taste, though his argument would seem to have more to do with psychology than with aesthetics.

> We have a certain sense of specialness about these voluntary bodily functions each must perform for himself — bathing, eating, defecating, urinating, copulating, performing the sexual perversions from heavy petting to necrophilia. Take eating, for example. There are few strong taboos around the act of eating; yet most people feel uneasy about being the only one at the table who is, or who is not, eating, and there is an absolute difference between eating a rare steak washed down by plenty of red wine and watching a close-up of a movie of someone doing so. One wishes to draw back when one is actually or imaginatively too close to the mouth of a man enjoying his dinner; in exactly the same way one wishes to remove oneself from the presence of a man and woman enjoying sexual intercourse. Not to withdraw is to peep, to pervert looking so that it becomes a sexual end in itself. As for a close-up of a private act which is also revolting, a man's vomiting, say, the avoidance-principle is the same as for a close-up of steak-eating, except that the additional unpleasantness makes one wish to keep an even greater distance.

But then he proceeds to connect excessive sexuality with politics and with morality. All the pillars of our existence, according to Elliott — the family, government, society and civilization itself — all are threatened when sex is on the loose. "Indecency," he says, "is put to politically dangerous uses." Furthermore, he says, if one is for civilization, "for even our warped but still possible society in preference to the anarchy that threatens from one side or the other," then one has to sacrifice "some sensuality of the irresponsible." This irresponsible sensuality, Elliott explains, is mostly to be found in "the politically repressed." "This would help to account," he goes on, "for the apparently greater sensuality among American Negroes than among American whites. . . ."

What all this sexual and political irresponsibility adds up to for Elliott is the dread disease of nihilism, which by his definition "would dissolve both the state and the family in the name of unrestricted gratification of natural appetite." The principal carriers are Genet, Burroughs and Henry Miller, though other writers, like Baldwin, are slightly infected. For some reason, however, the most subversive is Miller, whose sexual deviations and social estrangement Elliott regards as a menace to literature and society.

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> Again and again he represents the sexual antics of his characters as evidence of desperation, lurking behind the total despair of meaninglessness. He is what he says he is: an enemy not just of the badness of our society, not just of our specific society, but of society as such. To do what he can to get his readers also to become enemies of society, he assaults with persuasive force taboos, especially sexual taboos, which are intrinsic to the social order. . . . As an act against society, to write, publish, and distribute a book like *Tropic of Cancer* is more serious than to write, publish, and distribute a pamphlet which intellectually advocated the forcible overthrow of the government, but less serious than to take arms against the government — about on a par with inciting to rebellion. . . . In other words, the only plausible argument for suppressing *Tropic of Cancer* would be that its publication is a dangerous political act and not that the book is pornographic, even though its pornography is the main instrument of the book's nihilistic force.

Steiner's argument is more sophisticated. He, too, is disturbed by the lack of inhibition in pornography or in any other kind of writing. But his objection to too much sexual exposure is essentially that it makes public something that should remain private and restricts the imagination because sex has a limited repertoire. "Sexual relations are, or should be," says Steiner, "one of the citadels of privacy, the nightplace where we must be allowed to gather the splintered, harried elements of our consciousness to some kind of inviolate order and repose." This sexual homily has little to do with writing for it is really an argument against acts of exhibitionism or voyeurism, though its view of sex as reassuringly serene and relaxing — almost as good as a warm bath — and free of mystery or terror has literary implications. Steiner's seemingly more effective point is that there are only a limited number of sexual variations; hence, for Steiner, the vague and less erotic descriptions of sexual activity, of the kind one finds in writers like Stendhal, George Eliot, Tolstoy or Henry James, are more suggestive, hence more imaginative, than exact or charged descriptions of sexual relations could be. This, it seems to me, is not true, and, anyway, the comparison is unhistorical; but it is at least an arguable position. Like Elliott, however, Steiner introduces moral and political considerations when he claims that "the novels being produced under the new code of total statement . . . leave man less free, less himself, than they found him. . . ." In other words, it is nothing short of human freedom that is at

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stake when fiction loses its earlier reserve in handling sex and goes in for erotic detail.

There is simply no evidence to indicate that sex is robbed of its power and mystery and the range of feeling or thinking is narrowed when sex is treated as freely as any other kind of experience. On the contrary writers like D. H. Lawrence, Nabokov or Mailer cannot be said to have narrowed our views of sex or interfered with our freedom. It seems to me that Steiner does not like certain kinds of writing, which is his critical right, but what he is really doing is elevating his taste into an intellectual principle.

As for Elliott, I need scarcely point out that his social views are as conservative as his idea of literature. If there is a lesson to be drawn, it is that the two often go together; though recently some political radicals have turned out to be quite conservative in their literary tastes. It is impossible ever to prove such things, but I suspect that one cannot rule out *some* new things without invoking a principle that would rule out *any* new things. If certain kinds of writing or thinking are to be excluded, either because they are immoral or bad for art, it can be done only in the name of some existing norms or values, which are assumed to be fixed, and, therefore, outside of time and history. How else can one justify, for example, saying that Miller's or Genet's or Mailer's treatment of sex is out of bounds, except by appealing to notions of sex and morality of the most conventional kind.

Are we then to conclude that we cannot legitimately set any limits for sexuality — or for anything else — in literature? If by limits we mean arbitrary, *a priori* principles, rules of restraint, it would seem that we cannot impose any such limits without getting into some kind of intellectual if not legal censorship. Even if the taboos are advanced in the name of literature itself, they are in effect an attempt to outlaw a less restricted sensibility.

It might be objected that if no limits can be put on literature, then the role of criticism becomes limited. If anything goes, then there is no basis for literary or intellectual values. However, I am not proposing the abdication of criticism; what I have been suggesting is simply that restraint is an indirect form of criticism, and a very conservative one. Some critics might dismiss such an approach as extraliterary, but in the sense that every judgment, like every new

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work, is a stand in favor of certain kinds of art and against others — in this sense the literary moralists, in their objections to uninhibited writing, are asserting their preference for another kind of literature. Thus Elliott's remarks about sex and society might be said to be a critical statement, though a fairly conventional one, for his disgust with oversexed writing is actually an endorsement of undersexed, respectable, responsible, unalienated writing that is not too critical of existing society. Similarly, Steiner's distaste for sexual abandon or detail is connected with a nostalgia for the classics. In fact, most moralizing critics rarely propose genuine literary alternatives in the present; hence they are usually scolding contemporary writers in the name of some nonexistent moral or literary purity and responsibility that presumably existed in the past. But this moral Utopia, this myth of propriety and good taste, however vague, arbitrary and illusory, is the ideological equivalent of writing that is not so far out or has already been assimilated.

Editors of popular magazines know very well the distinction between old and new sensibilities, though they find it profitable to treat them as fashions. They are able to trade on the appetite for the new, which is increased by the moral resistance to it, by feeding respectable audiences more and more outrageous writing, so that things that used to be beyond the pale now have become old hat. Of course, this is due partly to a natural loosening up in matters of sex and morals, but it is also because the forbidden has been artificially inseminated into writing. The result is a kind of manufactured chaos, that is numbing the capacity of frivolous people to be shocked, and making it more and more difficult for serious people to think clearly about what is going on. Some writers and critics (like Fiedler) have been rushing to sign up for the future, while others (like Elliott) are busy frantically shoring up the past.

One result of the attempt to merchandize the new sexuality is the confusion between literature and pornography. (I should say I do not believe in any bans on pornography, but if there is a problem, it is legal and social, not literary.)

It has been argued by Susan Sontag that pornography on a certain level, like *Story of O* (and possibly even *Fanny Hill*) is a form of literature. Her argument, which is quite powerful and original, is that the pornographic imagination presents a total vision of

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sex and experience not unlike other extreme kinds of writing, and that it is not just a recital of sexual acts for purposes of excitation. Still, I think this view might not be incompatible with the idea that there can be good and bad pornography; for I am not sure it completely breaks down the distinction between the genre of pornography and literature.

One aspect of pornography, however, does seem pertinent to the question of sexuality in contemporary fiction, and suggests a link between pornography and literature. The standard form of pornography is usually perverse[1] and violent in a way that suggests some need to overthrow or transform accepted ideas of the sexual relation. Usually the hero is a victimized woman — or, more frequently, a girl — who is used and abused — rarely used up — and the plot is the story of all the things a man could imagine perpetrating on her. Yet the narrative, which is a male fantasy, is usually told ostensibly from the innocent point of view of the woman who has been violated, as though the author is acting out his fantasies both as a man and as a woman. The obvious example is *Fanny Hill*. And though *Story of O* has been rumored to have been written by a woman, it seems to be the same kind of male fantasy — which might suggest the beginning of a pornographic convention.

One can only guess at the meaning of this kind of sexual conversion. But what is particularly interesting is that a similar kind of converted, mechanized and dispersed sexuality is found in modern writing that cannot be dismissed as pornography. We see it in Burroughs, in Genet; and there is a good deal of perversity and ambiguity in Mailer's willful sexuality (as there was in D. H. Lawrence); in Selby's sadism; in Henry Miller's acting-out of boyish dreams; in Pynchon's bizarre connections; in John Barth's pan-sexuality, which by making everything possible normal, creates a system of comic perversity.

There is clearly a new kind of sexuality in modern fiction: not just more sex, but a different kind of sex, one that is undoubtedly related to the new moods and the new styles of living today. In the past, even in unconventional writers like Joyce or Lawrence or Kafka, the treatment of sex usually was quite straightforward and not very

1. I am using the term perverse in its conventional sense, though, obviously, the concept of perversity needs reexamination.

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far from the conventions of sex, even though there were occasional perverse implications. The most daring of the earlier novels rarely strayed beyond the heterosexual mold; when they went in for sexual detail it was mostly to describe intense passion or extramarital escapades. One might say they sublimated the more erotic and perverse drives into ambiguities of motive and feeling. Henry James is, of course, a classic instance. An example of how far the traditional novelist permitted himself to go is the story told in Stavrogin's confession in *The Possessed*. But this is an isolated episode, and the psychological underground revealed in it is dispersed in Stavrogin's character and politics, as it probably is in many other of Dostoevsky's obsessive figures and situations.

Of all the writers who have gone in for perversity, Mailer is probably the least perverse. Though his last novel, *An American Dream*, has come in for a good deal of scolding, it seems to me most of the critics have been shocked by only two things, the unconventional sexuality and the attitude toward the murder. If we ask what actually goes on sexually in the novel that might be considered off-limits, I suppose the one thing that stands out is the anal preoccupation. But it is hard to see on what ground this fixation — which Swift and Lawrence also had — could be banned in literature, any more than any other obsessive idea. What is more questionable is the liberating force with which it is endowed by Mailer, as it apparently was, too, by Lawrence, though less explicitly. It is thus the sexual philosophy and not the fantasy or the act that one might be critical of in literary terms. As for other sexual eccentricities in *An American Dream*, the only ones worth noting are the sharing of women in a semiincestuous way — as Rojack does with his father-in-law — and the heightened sexuality after the murder. But these, too, are obviously matters for literary — or psychological — analysis, not for approval or disapproval.

Some established critics have also charged Mailer with immorality on the grounds that Rojack is neither punished enough nor made to feel guilty enough for the murder of his wife. Now, aside from the primitive notion of the morality of modern literature inherent in such an accusation, whose source is to be found in popular culture, it represents a misreading of the novel. Mailer's novel is obviously a fantasy in which certain sexual obsessions are merged with visions

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of omnipotence and with fits of frustration. This is not an uncommon fantasy, even though it borders on the psychotic in its utter self-indulgence; but somewhere at the center is the little boy's fear — quite normal — that he might not make it. This fear, one might say, ties the novel to the more acceptable versions of our common experience. If one can talk of the subject of *An American Dream*, it might be said to be a fantasy of abnormal desire grounded by normal fear.

Like Mailer, Henry Miller has had to contend with literary and moral conventions. Yet, despite Miller's wild reputation, his perversity seems to be integrated into a fairly orthodox brand of bohemianism. One notes again and again in works like *Sexus* and *Tropic of Cancer* how Miller slides from sex into observations about literature, or society or existence in general. The elusiveness of sex is entangled in the religion of art. Somehow the footlooseness and the alienation of the young writer is associated with an avant-garde casualness and freedom in bouncing from one woman to another. The perversity, however, is almost always just below the surface, expressing itself in such things as the failure to connect with women, the lack of genuine pleasure, the intimation of voyeurism and exhibitionism in sexual relations involving groups of people and the insatiable appetite for whores, whom Miller is always trying to convert to women in his mind and to machines in bed. If one is to make any kind of judgment, though, it is not that Henry Miller's sexual happenings strain our capacity for novelty. On the contrary, his prowlings and frustrations seem almost commonplace and they succeed only in giving Miller the air of a middle-aged schoolboy. Far from being shocking, Miller's sexual bohemianism appears dated today.

To assimilate Norman Mailer or Henry Miller one simply has to face oneself. To assimilate writers like Genet and Burroughs one might have to redefine one's relation to an alien experience or to an alien idea of experience as well as to oneself. For Genet's hero, in his fiction, is a portrait of the underground man as a homosexual and a criminal; while Burroughs has created a homosexual spaceman who lives in a permanent nightmare of fornication, hallucination and destruction.

Of the two, I think Genet is a much more impressive figure than Burroughs. In my opinion, Genet's plays — particularly *The Balcony*

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and *The Blacks* — are among the outstanding works of our time. In both plays the morbid sexuality is transformed by a bizarre and perverse system of associations into a sense of wild being, free of moral attitudinizing or social pretense. The novels, however, are narrower: here the perversity exists in its natural habitat and one cannot help see it and judge it in relation to some other system that is not so perverse. I do not mean to take down the novels: on the contrary, I think they are in their own way marvelously conceived and executed; but they are a special genre, probably a limited one, a kind of autobiography of the imagination, though of course Genet appears to be describing real events in his life.

One of the difficulties in relating to the new sexual style is the assumption that the traditional handling of sex in literature is natural and pure and that what we have today is a distortion. The fact is that there is no basic sex — in the way there might be a basic English — except biologically or clinically. Sex in literature has always been ideological: it has always been conceived of in terms of values and attitudes toward other kinds of experience. In this respect, the depiction of sex has been an enactment of an idea of sex. Thus sex has been bawdy, comic, adventurous, immoral, fulfilling, frustrating, mysterious, tragic, open, liberating. In its literary evolution sexuality has reflected various pagan, courtly, pastoral, middle-class and romantic conventions. On the whole, though, the traditional idea of sex has been associated with individual fate, that is, with human realization or destruction, through love and passion. And it is with this sexual tradition that both pornography and the new sexuality might be said to have broken, substituting for it a deflated, polymorphous idea of sex divorced from love and from the institutionalized relations in which sex had in the past been located. It is an idea of sex that is experimental, unfettered, anarchic; and if, like more traditional views of sex, it is also represented as the expression of true being, it is based on a conception of being entirely fluid and unpredictable, and limited only by one's imagination.

The question, then, of how much perversity can be assimilated into literature has to do with the idea of sex rather than with its reality. If we can talk at all about the "reality" of sex, it would seem that a sense of its willfullness and its inventiveness, partly as an escape from its terrors, is more suggestive of the actual experience than a

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tasteful and restrained representation. As for one's imagination, it is even less restricted in its pursuit of erotic fantasies. Obviously, normality can no longer be regarded as a meaningful idea for writing, though it would seem that traditional values cannot be entirely disregarded. Frank Kermode recently argued that a commitment to the new, such as Harold Rosenberg advocates, means giving up all critical values, for if novelty creates its own value then the traditional method of judging new works by existing standards can no longer be applied. Kermode, it seems to me, was right in pointing to the danger of a principle that softens us up for any innovation or break with tradition. On the other hand, we run the opposite risk of opposing new styles in the name of old ones, and justifying this by failing to recognize that every new work alters old standards. It is clearly this reciprocal relation that makes for a proper balance of the new and the old, though, admittedly, it is not always easy to keep in mind that one is changing one's tastes in the act of applying them.

In practice, the less eccentric forms of the new sensibility and those which are related if only symbolically to more accepted intellectual conventions are more readily assimilated. John Barth, for example, is a less extreme figure, since sexual and social chaos are represented in his novels as metaphors for each other; as is Pynchon, in whom sexual fluidity appears to be a part of the fluidity of experience; or Susan Sontag, who in most of her writing shows herself to be more an advocate than an exponent of free-wheeling sexuality. Actually, it is the more extreme figures, like Burroughs and Genet (in his novels) who pose the problem and force its definition. And though extremism is one of the means by which literature deals with typical experience, extremist writing has been successful usually when its special vision has been able to generalize the extreme of human behavior. Kafka is perhaps the outstanding example of the invention of a new style of observation by a grotesque — almost psychotic — imagination, that has become a natural style. But I am not at all sure whether it can be said of Burroughs and Genet in his fiction, and particularly of their disciples, that they have succeeded in imposing their style on our experience. Undoubtedly some of the perversity of modern writing has expressed itself in sexual cultism, especially in the less gifted writers, for whom violence, sadism and homosexuality

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make up a self-inclosed world, sealed off even from other forms of extreme behavior. To some extent, it is a matter of literary quality, as obviously writers like Selby or Rechy exhibit the faults of the genre more than do the larger talents. But this brings us right back to the original problem, for what is lacking in the less talented works is precisely the ability to transcend or to generalize one's sexual obsessions.

In the long run, however, the literary value of this kind of extremism is an historical rather than a theoretical question. One who thinks of himself as a participant in the contemporary scene might even contend that in raising these questions and posing them in this way, one is simply outside the intellectual moods that go into the advanced forms of contemporary writing. Undoubtedly the new sensibility reflects the current emphasis on personal freedom as a way of dissociating from the political establishment. And what is commonly regarded as perversity might be thought of as a symbol of this detachment, as it was, almost explicitly, for example, in Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*. To be sure, sexual freedom has gone so far that one wonders what would be out of bounds if the new life style were to take over.

But if one might speculate about the future, perhaps the ideal solution would be to dissociate sex completely from morality and from politics. Who knows whether this will ever happen? But if there were no restrictions on sex, in life or literature, if sexual freedom were not thought of as a paradise for radicals and purgatory for conservatives — if sex were simply taken for granted like other neutral activities, like, say, eating or swimming, then possibly the air might be cleared so that the question of sex in literature could become a purely literary question, not a battlefield for moral and social issues. If sex were free it would have nothing to do with the idea of freedom.

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Irving Howe

NOTES ON HERE AND NOW

Ferment, conflict, innovation, violence, a measure of madness — all these and more characterize the American scene in 1967. The image of social stability, a sort of low-keyed containment of grasp and goal, which dominated both liberal and conservative thought only a few years ago, has proved to be an illusion. The welfare state in which we live is strained by tension and clash. But before examining these, let's look at the welfare state as an idea or model — a fixed abstraction, an "ideal type" — in order to gain some historical perspective.

I. The Abstract Model

A model is not a picture, either still or moving; it lacks, and in order to serve its purpose it must lack, the dynamics of reality. It may articulate skeletal structures but it cannot describe either the processes of change or idiosyncratic traits.

Among current models the most useful, I think, is that of the welfare state. By the welfare state one signifies a capitalist economy in which the interplay of private and/or corporate owners in a largely regulated market remains dominant but in which the workings of the economy are so modified that the powers of free disposal by property owners are controlled politically.

The welfare state is constantly being reconstructed. The model we advance for it may suggest an equilibrium, but in the actuality from which the model is drawn there persist serious difficulties, conflicts and breakdowns. If the welfare state could reach, so to say, a point of internal perfection, the point at which it would all but approach its "ideal type," it would comprise a system of regulated conflicts making for pluralist balance and stability. (Indeed, it is a

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characteristic error of its apologists that they write about the reality as if it were in fact a good deal closer than it is to the model.) But this point of perfection cannot be reached, if only because the welfare state appears within a given historical context, so that it must always be complicated by the accumulation of problems provided by a capitalist economy and a specific national past; complicated, further, by concurrent international conflicts which, as we now see, can crucially affect and distort its formation; and complicated, as well, by a series of pressures, ranging from status ambition to moral idealism, which it is not, as a society, well equipped to handle.

Within certain limits having to do with basic relations of power and production, the welfare state remains open to varying sociopolitical contents, since it is itself the visible evidence of a long and continuing struggle among classes and groups for greater shares in the social product. That the welfare state exists at all is due not merely to autonomous processes within the economy, or enlightened self-interest on the part of dominant classes or moral idealism which over decades has stirred segments of the population into conscience; no, the welfare state is primarily the result of social struggle on the part of the labor movement. If the working class has not fulfilled the "historic tasks" assigned to it by Marxism and if it shows, at least in the advanced industrial countries, no sign of revolutionary initiative, it has nevertheless significantly modified the nature and softened the cruelties of capitalist society. The surrender of the Marxist revolutionary perspective should by no means be equated with the view that there will not or need not be major social change.

In a curious way — the analogy need not be stressed — the welfare state has served a function similar to that of Communism in the East. I do not suggest an equivalence in value, since for myself, as a socialist, there can be no question that it is immensely more desirable to live in a society that allows political freedom and thereby organized struggle and independent class action. Yet, from a certain long-range perspective, one could say that both the welfare state and the Communist societies have had the effect of raising the historical expectations of millions of people, even while offering radically different kinds of satisfaction and sharing in common failures. Both have enabled previously mute segments of society to feel that the state ought to act in their behalf and that perhaps they have a role in history as

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active subjects demanding that the state serve their needs. The contrast with earlier societies is striking, for in them the dominant conviction was, as Michael Walzer writes, that

> the state always *is* more than it *does*. Pre-welfare theorists described it as a closely knit body, dense and opaque, whose members were involved emotionally as well as materially, mysteriously as well as rationally, in the fate of the whole. The members ought to be involved, it was said, not for the sake of concrete benefits of any sort, but simply, for the sake of communion. Since loyalty was a gift for which there was to be no necessary return, it could not be predicated on anything so clear-cut as interest. It depended instead on all sorts of ideological and ceremonial mystification. . . . The state still does depend on ideology and mystery, but to a far less degree than ever before. It has been the great triumph of liberal theorists and politicians to undermine every sort of political divinity, to shatter all the forms of ritual obfuscation, and to turn the mysterious oath into a rational contract. The state itself they have made over . . . into a machine, the instrument of its citizens (rather than their mythical common life) devoted to what Bentham called "welfare production." It is judged, as it ought to be, by the amounts of welfare it produces and by the justice and efficiency of its distributive system.

What occurs characteristically during the growth of the welfare state is a series of "invasions," by previously neglected or newly cohered social groups demanding for themselves a more equitable portion of the social product and appealing to the common ideology of welfarism as the rationale for their demands. (Again an analogy with Communism: the dominant ideology is exploited and violated by the ruling elite, yet can be turned against its interests.)

In its early stages, the welfare state is "invaded" mostly by interest groups — economic, racial, ethnic — which seek both improvements in their condition and recognition of their status. An interest claim that is made through norms the entire society says it accepts is harder to reject than one which sets up new norms not yet enshrined in the society's formal value system — and that, in passing, is one reason it is today easier to press for desirable domestic legislation than to affect foreign policy. In its later stages — which I believe we are just beginning to approach in the United States — the welfare state is subjected to a series of pressures that morally are both more grandiose and more trivial than those of the usual interest groups; since now it becomes possible for claims to be entered with,

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and against, the welfare state by those who yearn forward to what they hope will be a splendid future and those who yearn backward to what they imagine was a golden past.

This course of "invasions" is by no means completed in the United States, and indeed is scandalously frustrated by racial and social meanness. As long, however, as there are groups trying to break in and powers trying to keep them out, we can be certain that the welfare state will be marked by severe conflict, even though the "invading" groups may differ from decade to decade. Nor is there any certainty whatever that the welfare state will prove receptive to all the claims likely to be made by groups largely outside its system of dispensation. It is possible that the legitimate demands of the Negroes will not be met and that this would, in turn, lead to the virtual destruction of the welfare state as we know it; but if that were to occur it would not, I believe, be the result of an inherent dynamic or ineluctable necessity within the welfare state as a socio-economic system; rather it would be the result of a tradition of racism so deeply ingrained in American life that it threatens to overwhelm any form of society.

This process of "invasion" is one that a good many of the younger American radicals find troublesome and concerning which I find a good many of them confused. Except for a few who have developed a snobbish contempt for the working class, they acknowledge the justice of the claims made by deprived groups trying to gain a larger share of power, goods and recognition; but they fear that once this happens there must follow among the once-insurgent groups an adaptation to detested values and a complacent lapse into material comfort. In part, the young radicals are right. At a particular moment, a once-insurgent group may settle for what seems too little — though we ought to be suspicious of contemptuous judgments made by people who have not shared in past struggles or have merely grown up to enjoy their rewards. At a particular moment, a once-insurgent group may move from the drama of popular struggle to the politics of limited pressure. Right now, for example, the trade unions seem relatively quiescent; having won major victories, they may for a time content themselves with minor adjustments; but with time they are likely to raise their horizons of possibility and again come into conflict with the existing order; and in any case, it takes a

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peculiarly sectarian mentality not to see the tremendous potentialities of the recent UAW demand for something approaching a guaranteed annual wage for blue-collar workers.

Simply to stop at the point where formerly rebellious groups are "absorbed" into society is — to miss the point. For what the young radicals fail sufficiently to see is that when a major social group breaks into the welfare society, then — even though full justice is by no means done — the society nevertheless undergoes an important betterment. The United States after the "absorption" of the labor movement is a different and, on the whole, better society than it was before. By a certain judgment the unions have succumbed to the system, though we should remember that only rarely had they claimed to be its intransigent opponents. Yet even in their relative quiescence of the last few decades, the unions have performed an extremely valuable function: they have maintained a steady pressure, more than any other institution, in behalf of domestic social legislation which benefits not only their own members but a much wider segment of the population.

If — it is a large if — the Negroes succeed in establishing themselves within the society to the extent that the labor unions have, there will occur changes which can only be described as major and perhaps revolutionary — though there will not have occurred that "revolution" which various kinds of ideologues hope the Negroes will enact for them. Were such victories to be won by the Negroes, there would probably occur a settling-down to enjoy the fruits of struggle. But if past experience is any guide, there would follow after a certain interval a new rise in social appetites among the once-insurgent group, so that it would continue to affect the shape of society even if no longer through exclusively insurgent methods.

Is there, however, a built-in limit to this process of "invasion"? Almost certainly, yes; and by habit one would say, the point where fundamental relations of power seem threatened. But we are nowhere near that point, a large array of struggles awaits us before reaching it, and we cannot even be sure, certainly not as sure as we were a few decades ago, that this point can be located precisely. The history of the Left in the twentieth century is marked by a series of dogmatic assertions as to what could not be done short of revolutionary upheaval; the actuality of history has consisted of changes won through

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struggle and human will which have in fact achieved some of the goals that were supposed to be unattainable short of apocalypse.

II. Some Other Models

The model of the welfare state I have been using here is of course an extrapolation from the complexities of history, and even if we are to content ourselves with it we must acknowledge the presence in our society of elements it cannot account for and which, indeed, conflict with it. Even the traditional laissez-faire model of capitalism, which by common consent is now obsolete, retains some importance. There are aspects of the society — certain segments of the economy, certain sectors of the country, certain strands of our ideological folklore — in regard to which the traditional model of capitalism retains much relevance, so that in discussing the welfare state, or welfare capitalism, one must bear in mind the earlier historical form out of which it emerged. More immediately, however, there are several models which should be looked at, not merely or even so much as competitors but rather as supplements, necessary complications, to the welfare state model.

The Garrison State. The war economy is like a parallel structure, a double aorta, of the welfare state, at some points reinforcing it through an economic largesse which a reactionary Congress might not otherwise be willing to allow, and at other points crippling it through sociopolitical aggrandizement such as we can observe at this very moment. In consequence, we can never be free of the haunting possibility that if our military expenditure were radically cut there would follow a collapse or a very severe crisis in the welfare state. Nor can we be sure that gradually the military arrangement will not overwhelm and consume welfare. But these, I would stress, are matters of political decision and thereby of social struggle; they will be settled not through some mysterious economic automatism but through the encounter of opposing classes and groups.

The Mass Society. This theory proposes a model of society in which traditional class distinctions have become blurred and in which there occurs a steady drift toward a bureaucratic and prosperous authoritarianism, with a population grown atomized, "primary" social groups disintegrated and traditional loyalties and associations become

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lax. Herbert Marcuse writes: "Those social groups which dialectical theory identified as forces of negation are either defeated or reconciled within the established system." This means that the working class which Marxism assigned to revolutionary leadership seems either unwilling or incapable of fulfilling the assignment. That there is a tendency in modern society toward a slack contentment it would be foolish to deny. But I think it sentimental to slide from an abandonment of traditional Marxist expectations to a vision of historical stasis in which men are fated to be the zombies of bureaucratic organization, zombies stuffed with calories, comfort and contentment; or to slide from the conclusion that revolutionary expectations no longer hold in the West to a Spenglerian gloom in which we must yield the idea of major social change.

The trouble with the "mass society" theory is that, if pushed hard enough, it posits a virtual blockage of history. Yet the one thing that history, including the history of the last several decades, teaches us is that, for good or bad, such an eventuality seems most unlikely. Even in what seems to some disenchanted intellectuals the murk of stability, change is ceaseless. Twenty years ago who would have supposed that Russia and China would be at each other's throats, or that the seeming monolith of Communism would disintegrate? That a conservative French general would succeed in ending a colonial war in Algeria after both the liberal and radical parties failed? That in the United States Catholic students would be picketing Cardinal Spellman's residence? That a silent generation would appear, to be followed by a remarkably articulate one, which in turn . . . well, who knows? What looks at a given moment like the end of days turns out to be a mere vestibule to novelty.

One interesting offshoot of the mass society theory, popular in some academic and student circles, declares that in a society where revolution is impossible and reform ineffectual, the only remaining strategy of protest is a series of dramatic raids from the social margin, akin to the guerrilla movements of Latin America. Insofar as this strategy draws upon the American tradition of individual moral protest, it has a decided respectability if only, I think, a limited usefulness. Insofar as it is meant to satisfy an unearned nostalgia, it is utterly feckless. Raising hell is a fine American habit, and if hell is even approximately identified, a useful one. But in contemporary

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society there is always the danger that the desperado exhausts himself much sooner than he discomfits society, and then retires at the ripe age of thirty and a half muttering about the sloth of the masses. Or he may be crushed in the embrace of a society always on the lookout for interesting spectacles.

A far more serious and honorable version of this strategy is that of absolute moral conscience, for example, that of the young people who, while not religious, refuse the Vietnam war on moral grounds. Their protest is to be respected. If they are simply bearing witness, then nothing more need be said. If, however, it is claimed that they stir other, more conventional and sluggish segments of the mass society into response, we have abandoned the ground of moral absolutes and moved to the slippery terrain of effectiveness and expediency — and then what they do must be scrutinized as a political tactic, open to the problem of consequences both expected and unexpected.

Liberal Pluralism. This theory, associated with the name of Daniel Bell, sees the society as a pluralist system in which competing pressure groups — some reflecting socioeconomic interests and others refracting the aspirations of status groups — tacitly agree to abide by the "rules of the game" and to submit their rival claims to the jurisdiction of technical experts. Superficially, this approach is congruent with the one I have here outlined, insofar as it traces the effects of political clash within a given society; fundamentally, it is divergent from the approach I have taken, insofar as it accepts the society as a given and fails to penetrate beneath political maneuver to the deeper contradictions of social interest. Still, whether we like it or not, this theory helps describe a good part of what has been happening in the United States these last few decades, especially when one confines oneself to the local texture of political life. I think, however, it is a theory inadequate on several counts:

- It fails to consider sufficiently that within the society there remain long-range economic and technological trends threatening the stability, perhaps the survival, of the pluralist system: that is, it asserts a state of equilibrium too readily.

- It fails to recognize, as a rule, that even when the society is operating at a high degree of efficiency and what passes for a notable benevolence, it does not sufficiently satisfy human needs and instead

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gives rise to new kinds of trouble with which it is poorly equipped to deal.

• It fails to acknowledge sufficiently that the very "rules of the game" are prearranged so as to favor inequities of power and wealth.

III. Some Complications of Reality

The welfare state does not appear in a vacuum; it arises at a certain point in the development of capitalist society and must therefore confront the accumulated traditions and peculiarities of that society. In Britain it comes to a society where serious problems remain of a premodern and predemocratic kind, difficulties having to do with aristocracy and caste. In France it comes to a society where the necessary industrialization has just been completed. In Sweden it comes to a society with a minimum of historical impediments or world political entanglements and therefore functions best of all — though here, as Gunnar Myrdal describes it, the welfare state tends to break down organs of rural and village self-government. In the United States it comes at a time of severe historical and moral tensions: the former concerning our role as a world power and the latter a long-term shift in the country's pattern of values. Let us glance at the second.

For some decades now there has been noticeable in this country a slow disintegration of those binding assumptions which, operating almost invisibly, hold a society together and provide its moral discipline. These values can hardly be evoked in a phrase but we can at least point to a few: a creed of individualist self-reliance linked with a belief that the resultant of unrestrained struggle among private persons (atomized economic units) will be to the common good; a conviction that the claims of conscience, seriously entertained, and the promptings of will, persistently accepted, are in fact equivalent; a belief in work as salvation and therapy; a steady devotion to privacy, rigor, control and moral sobriety. In short, the whole American mythos which we have inherited from the nineteenth century and which in retrospect has been remarkably successful in unifying the country.

During the last few decades, however, this creed has proven inadequate to the American reality, with the evidence ranging from the crisis of urbanization to the gradual decay of religious belief. Perhaps the most striking evidence has been the way in which the WASP elite has slowly been losing its hegemony in American society. So far

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as I can tell, this loss of hegemony, accompanied by a decline in self-confidence, has occurred more on the social surface than at the economic base, but with time it is bound also to affect the latter.

The American creed served to unify a nation that in its earlier years had largely consisted of a loose compact of regions. Once these regions were gradually melted into a nation, the unifying ideology began to lose some of its power and the sociocultural elite articulating the ideology began to decline. Precisely the unification of the country through the cement of this ideology gave an opportunity for new interest groups and competing moral styles to press their claims.

This process could not, of course, act itself out autonomously. It was always intertwined with social struggles. And as it slowly unfolds itself at the center of society there occur crisis reactions at the extremes: on the Right, a heartfelt cry that morality is being destroyed, religion mocked, our way of life abandoned; on the Left, an impatience to be done with old ways and to plunge joyously, sometimes merely programmatically, into experiment. The earnest suburban middle class which only a few years ago was shaking with indignation at the collapse of standards and the hippies of Haight-Ashbury and the East Village — these form symmetrical polarities along the spectrum of American moral life, each reacting to the gradual decay of American convictions and neither absorbed by the kind of pluralistic moderation and maneuvering encouraged by the welfare state. Both the little old lady in tennis shoes and the young hippie in sandals are demonstrating their hostility to the "role playing" of the current scene. Both provide complications of response which our increasingly rationalized and rationalistic society finds it hard to handle. For in a sense, the kind of issues raised by Barry Goldwater and the SDS are symmetrical in concern, if sharply different in moral value. Both of these metapolitical tendencies are reacting to long-range historical and cultural developments at least as much as to immediate political issues.

What then are the political consequences of this gradual deterioration of the American value system?

• The traditional elite can no longer assert itself with its former powers and self-assurance. One reason Adlai Stevenson roused such positive reactions among intellectuals was that it seemed to them that he was a figure in the old style, for which, in their conservative disenchantment, they had developed a sudden fondness.

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• The image of America inherited from folklore, textbooks and civic rhetoric proves unusable, and the result is an enormous barrier of intellectual and emotional fog which prevents people from apprehending their true needs.

• At the margins of the welfare state there spring up apocalyptic movements and moods, seemingly political but often in their deepest impulses antipolitical (they want not a change in power relations but an end of days). Reflecting the pressures of the fading past and the undiscovered future, these movements confound, yet sometimes also refresh, the politics of the welfare state.

IV. Inner Problems of the Welfare State

It is not only the distinctive American setting which affects our version of the welfare state; there are also certain characteristics which seem to be intrinsically dysfunctional or at least unattractive. A few of them:

• Especially in America, the welfare state fails to live up to its formal claims. At best it is a semi-welfare state; at worst an anti-welfare state. It allows a significant minority, the chronic poor, to be dumped beneath the social structure, as a *lumpen* deposit of degradation and pathology.

• The welfare state may gratify the interests of previously deprived minorities and thereby benefit the society as a whole; but while doing this, and perhaps because of it, the welfare state tends to dampen concern with such larger values as justice, fraternity, equality and community. At least for a time, one consequence is that fundamental issues of power are muted; for better or worse — I think for worse — the system as such is hardly an issue in public debate.

Yet here again we ought to beware of a sin prevalent among intellectuals: the sin of impatience with history. For even in its brief existence, and with its own "historical tasks" far from fulfilled, the welfare state has witnessed the growth of an enormous body of social criticism, as well as the appearance of the militantly idealistic young, both of which insist that we pay attention to precisely the larger issues. If the welfare state lulls some groups into acquiescence, it also grants a succeeding generation the relative affluence to experiment with its life styles and cry out against the slumbers of their elders.

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The crucial question, to which no answer can yet be given, is whether this concern will remain limited to a tiny segment of the population, driven wild with frustrated reachings towards transcendence.

• In its own right, the welfare state does not arouse strong loyalties. It seems easier, if no more intelligent, to die for King and Country, or the Stars and Stripes or the Proletarian Fatherland than for Unemployment Insurance and Social Security. The welfare state makes for a fragmentation of publics and, at a certain point, a decline in political participation. By one of those accursed paradoxes history keeps throwing up, the welfare state seems to undercut the vitality of the democratic process even while strengthening both its formal arrangements and its socioeconomic base.

But again a word of caution. It should not be assumed that in a country like the United States, despite the rise of group interest politics and the atomization of social life, the traditional claims of the nation no longer operate. For they do, even if in a muted and more quizzical way. Millions of people still respond to the call of patriotism and the rhetoric of democracy, even in their corniest versions. The centrifugal tendencies set into motion by the welfare state must always, therefore, be seen against a background of historical traditions and national sentiments which lie deeply imbedded in collective life.

• The welfare state cannot, within the limits of the nation-state, cope with the growing number of socioeconomic problems that are soluble only on an international level or do not really fit into the received categories of class or group conflict. As Richard Titmuss says:

> It is much harder today to identify the causal agents of change — the microbes of social disorganization and the viruses of impoverishment — and to make them responsible for the costs of "disservices." Who should bear the social costs of the thalidomide babies, of urban blight, of smoke pollution, of the obsolescence of skills, of automation, of the impact on the peasants of Brazil of synthetic coffee which will dispense with the need for coffee beans?

• The welfare state provides no clear or necessary outlook concerning the role of the nation in the modern world. It is almost compatible with any foreign policy, despite our too-easy assumption that domestic liberalism is likely to go together with restraint abroad. The welfare state can be yoked to a foreign policy which saves Titoist

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Yugoslavia and destroys Vietnam, which provides food to India and shores up dictators in Asia, which proclaims and begins a little to enable the Alliance for Progress and sanctions the Dominican intervention. The consequences are severe dislocations within the welfare state, splits between groups oriented primarily toward the improvement of their own conditions and groups oriented primarily toward improving the place our society occupies within the world. Of this, more later.

• Within its terms and limits the welfare state finds it very difficult to provide avenues of fulfillment for many of the people whose conditions it has helped to improve — the workers displaced by automation, the Negroes given the vote but little else, the young seeking work that makes sense. That is why there now appear new formations, such as the subculture of the alienated young, responding primarily to their felt sense of the falseness of things. If the revolt of the Radical Right was, in Richard Hofstadter's phrase, an outburst of status politics — the anxious need of an insecure segment to assert itself in the prestige hierarchy — then the revolt of the alienated young is, among other things, an antistatus outburst — a wish to break loose from the terms of categorization fixed by the society. That, in the course of this effort, the young sometimes settle into categories, styles and mannerisms quite as rigid as those against which they rebel, is still another testimony to the power of repressive social arrangements.

V. Politics of the Welfare State

The politics of the welfare state extends back into the early twentieth century, through a variety of parallel and competing traditions — the labor movement, the Socialist movement, the various liberal groups, the moral pressures exerted through Christian action, the increasing role of the Jews as a liberal force. But for our present purposes we can date the beginning of welfare-state politics as a style of coalition to the early thirties and perhaps even more precisely to the election of 1932, one of the few in American history which marked a major realignment of political forces. In that election the unions began to play the powerful role they would command during the next few decades; large numbers of Negroes began their historic switch to the Democratic Party; the city machines found it expedient to go along with Roosevelt's policies. And soon significant numbers of intel-

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lectuals would begin their entry into practical politics. This coalition would remain a major force in American life during the next three or so decades. When all or most of its component parts could be held together, formally or informally, and it could command the practical issues and/or moral appeals to win a good cut of the middle-class vote, this coalition could often win elections on a national scale and in many industrialized states. When there were group defections, victory went to the Right. In general one can say that this coalition was most successful whenever it managed to link strong economic interests with moral urgencies, the politics of pressure with the traditions of American liberalism and populism. I believe that this lesson still holds, despite sharply changed circumstances.

What specific forms did this coalition take? It could be one or more of the following:

> a bloc of organizations and movements cooperating for a legislative or electoral end;
>
> a long-range concurrence in electoral behavior, so that certain expectations could reasonably be inferred — e.g., that even if we do not have self-conscious classes or disciplined publics there are at least certain fundamental recognitions of common interest;
>
> intermittent activization of class and interest groups when aroused by specific issues — e.g., "right to work" laws, Negro rights, etc.;
>
> various electoral and political arrangements within and across the political parties.

Now one way of looking upon recent American politics is to conclude that in recent years the liberal-left coalition has gradually disintegrated and with the Vietnam war, seems virtually to have come to an end.

There are plenty of signs. The electoral blocs seem to function with less assurance and predictability than ten or twenty years ago. Workers reaching a measure of affluence are less likely to follow the signals of their union leadership; they may veer off into middle-class styles or lapse into racialism. Still, when certain issues are clearly drawn along class lines, as for example during the last presidential

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election or the earlier struggles around "right to work" laws, the labor vote can still cohere into a major force.

Similar signs of change seem to be occurring among the Negroes, where the massive commitment to the Democratic Party may — though it certainly has not yet — come to an end. And among younger people there is a growing inclination to respond to politics as if group interest were somehow vulgar or even reprehensible and what mattered most were political "styles" and moral, or pseudomoral, appeals rising above socioeconomic concerns.

Why then has this coalition devoted to defending and extending the welfare state come to a condition of crisis? A few answers suggest themselves:

• As the interest groups become increasingly absorbed into the welfare state, their combativeness decreases, at least for a time. They develop a stake in the status quo and become economically and psychologically resistant to new kinds of insurgency. Thus, while a general case can and should be made out for a community of interests among the unions, the Negroes and the unorganized poor, these groups will often clash both in their immediate demands and their political styles.

• What I would call the "rate of involvement" among the interest groups and moral issue groups is likely to be sharply different at various moments, and the result is unavoidable friction. When the unions were surging ahead in the thirties, they received little help from the churches; it did not even occur to anyone at that time to expect much help. The Catholic Church in particular was regarded as a major center of political reaction. Today we witness the astonishing and exhilarating rise of ferment within the Catholic community, while the unions, though still fierce guardians of yesterday's gains, are not notable as centers of innovation.

• Ideally there ought to be cooperation between those committed to a politics of pressure and those committed to a politics of insurgency; but in practice the latter often tend to define themselves through dissociation from the former (perhaps on the "principle" that you strike out most violently against your closest relatives) while the former feel their survival and even their honor to be threatened by the latter. As long as the wretched Vietnam war continues and social stagnation consequently characterizes our domestic life, this conflict is likely to be exacerbated.

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• The programmatic demands advanced by the liberal-left groups for domestic reforms during the thirties have by now either been mostly realized or require merely — but that's *some* merely! — quantitative implementation. By itself this does not yield a dramatic or inspiring perspective; it does not excite the young, it barely arouses those in whose behalf it is advanced, and it proves more and more inadequate for coping with the new problems we all experience more sharply than we can define.

• There has occurred over the Vietnam war a split between groups focusing primarily on domestic issues, mostly the unions, and the groups focusing primarily on foreign policy, mostly the middle-class peace organizations and radical youth. During the twentieth century, with the possible exception of the 1916 election, foreign policy has never played a decisive role in American elections; or, to modify that a bit, disputes over foreign policy, such as the interventionist/isolationist quarrel in the thirties, did not threaten the survival of the liberal coalition. Today this is no longer true, and cannot be true — even though I am unhappily convinced that in an electoral showdown the moral protestants, among whom I wish to include myself, would prove to be a very small minority. Never in the past has it been possible to rally a successful liberal-left movement on issues of foreign policy alone or predominantly. Whether it can be done today remains very much an open question.

• We are living through an exhaustion, perhaps temporary, of American liberalism. It is not, at the moment, rich in programmatic suggestions. It has lost much of its earlier élan. It has become all too easily absorbed into establishment maneuvers, so that it shares a measure of responsibility for the Vietnam disasters and ghetto outbreaks. It has not developed new leaders. In short, as its most intelligent spokesmen know, it is in a state of moral and intellectual disarray.

Yet in fairness one should add that pretty much the same difficulties beset most or all other political tendencies in the United States. One of the remarkable facts about our political life is the paucity of specific proposals to come from the far Left or far Right. A comparison with the thirties is instructive, for whatever else was wrong with American radicalism (almost everything) at that time, it did advance specific proposals for legislation and thereby agitation. Today that is hardly the case. "Participatory democracy" may be a sentiment as noble as it is vague, but even its most ardent defenders

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cannot suppose it to be a focused proposal for our national life. And by a similar token, it is interesting that Governor Reagan did not really try to dismantle the welfare state against which he had mock-raged during his campaign.

I think that for the next period we shall have to live and work within the limits of the welfare state. There is only one possibility that this perspective will be invalidated, and that is a racial civil war pitting white against black — a tragedy which even the most puerile advocates of "nose-to-nose confrontation" must recognize as utterly disastrous. Unless we are to delude ourselves with the infantile leftism of the talk about "Negro revolution" (sometimes invoked most fiercely by guerrillas with tenure), the first point on the political agenda must be a renewed struggle for the fulfillment of the claims advanced by the welfare state. And that, in turn, means a simultaneous struggle to end the Vietnam war and to bring large-scale economic help to the Negro ghettos.

VI. A Word About the Future

If one could view the present moment with detachment, one might say that we are witnessing the breakdown of the old political coalition which helped usher in the welfare state and perhaps the slow beginnings of a new coalition to improve and transcend the welfare state. In this new coalition the labor movement would still have — it would have to have — a central role, but no longer with the decisive weight of the past. The churches would matter a great deal more, and so would the American "new class," that scattered array of intellectuals, academicians and technicians. Issues of foreign policy would occupy a central place in the program of such a coalition, as would those concerning "quality of life" — though the immediate major domestic concern remains the realization of the welfare-state expectations for the American Negroes. In such a coalition there might come together the tradition of moral protest and the bearing of witness with the tradition of disinterested service. All of this could occur only through a radicalization of American liberalism: a politics unqualifiedly devoted to democratic norms but much more militant, independent and combative than the left-liberal world of today.

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Whenever in the past American radicalism has flourished somewhat, it has largely been in consort with an upsurge of liberalism. There have been two major periods: first during the years immediately preceding World War I and then during the thirties. The notion that radicalism can grow fat on the entrails of liberalism is a crude error, an absurdity.

But all of this remains hope and speculation. Before such a new coalition emerges, if ever it does, there is likely to be severe tension and conflict among its hoped-for component parts. The Vietnam war stands as a harsh barrier, political and psychological, which must be broken down in order to take care of our business at home — which is by no means to accept the quietistic and reactionary argument that until the war is ended nothing can or should be done at home.

Even the full realization of the "idea" of the welfare state would not bring us to utopia or the good society. The traditional socialist criticisms in respect to the maldistribution of power, property and income would still hold. But to continue the struggle for such a realization is both a political and human responsibility. And through the very struggle to realize the "idea" of the welfare state — if I may offer a "dialectic" observation — it is possible to gain the confidence, strength and ideas through which to move beyond the welfare state. Unfortunately, American intellectuals do not seem well equipped for keeping to this dual perspective: they either lapse into a genteel and complacent conservatism or they veer off into an ultimatistic and pseudo-utopian leftism. Yet, when one comes to think of it, why should it be so difficult to preserve a balance between the struggle to force the present society to enact the reforms it claims to favor and the struggle to move beyond the limits of the given society? Tactically, to be sure, this creates frequent difficulties; but conceptually, as a guiding principle, I think it our only way.

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Leo E. Litwak

IN SHOCK

The war against Germany took a bad turn; several divisions along the Belgian border were overrun; replacements were needed. So finally my time had come. What a relief to be drafted. I was ready for war. They took me from a college campus where I had been allowed to practice the liberal arts and sent me to a camp in South Carolina.

I had no talent in the medical line but they made me an aid man. I wore red cross brassards pinned at each shoulder. My steel helmet was marked with red crosses on a white field. I bore two kits suspended from a shoulder harness, anchored by a pistol belt. My kits held gauze bandages, ammonia capsules, small compresses, belly compresses, bandage scissors, merthiolate, sulfa packets, sodium amytol tablets, a hypodermic needle for blisters, tags for the wounded and morphine syrettes for shock.

Each day after morning calisthenics, we sat baking in a rubble field, dusted by South Carolina clay while noncoms lectured us on the aid man business. I was told all that might happen — from blisters to amputations — and the proper responses. For blisters draw the fluid, clean with merthiolate, cushion with gauze. For amputations, apply a tourniquet, cover the stump, inject morphine to prevent shock. Get the patient in shock position and keep him warm. I learned the venereal diseases from clap to lymphogranuloma inguinale. Bare literacy was an achievement for most. I alone volunteered the right answers. But no one was fooled. The least literate of them could draw blood, give injections, apply splints. I had no talent for it. I couldn't even do a proper job bandaging a compliant buddy simulating a broken clavicle. Instead of a neat mummy, hand strapped to

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the chest, the upper torso swathed in two-inch gauze, there was a tangle of loose folds, undone by the first movement.

Sergeant Carrol, unstringing my mannequin then rewrapping with flourishes of gauze, asked me, "How the hell did you ever get into this outfit?"

Dewey Carrol was a sack of beef with mechanic's hands, little eyes in a pumpkin face, his belt notched beneath a swollen paunch. He knew the whole repertory of bandaging. He could wrap any part of a man. He had deft fingers and a fumbling mouth. For lymphogranuloma inguinale he had to say "blue balls."

I was bigger than most. I had good shoulders and could do fifty push-ups. I ran the obstacle course on my own time in order to be ready for the day when I'd meet the dead and dying. But I showed small promise as a medic. My hands wouldn't serve me. We practiced giving each other injections, angling the needle for the different shots — subcutaneous, intramuscular, intravenous. I didn't flinch when my novice buddy punctured my arm. When I jabbed in return I pierced a vein and stained his forearm with a bruise.

Dewey Carrol said, "With hands like that you got a tough job eating breakfast. Too bad you can't work with your tongue. Then you'd be champ." I laughed with him, agreeing to appear as a clown.

Dewey wasn't alone in taking that line. The other GI's spotted me as an eager-beaver college boy, trying to get ahead with big talk in lieu of physical grace. They were as suspicious of me as if I were queer. Yet I could take as much punishment as the best of them. I never fell out on a march. I made good time around the obstacle course. I could bear to look at anything. I was even ready to look at dead men. I knew that I could make myself very still and cold, and so long as I didn't stir nothing would offend me. If they didn't ask my help I'd be fine. I could always trust my mouth to distract others from my blunders.

Joe Witty didn't have to rely on his mouth. He was the other college boy in the outfit, a premed student from the University of Michigan. He was a tall, wiry, Irish boy, long-faced, with a hard chin. He had no intention of allowing anyone to treat him as a clown. He volunteered no answers. He respected the laconic tradition of our American knighthood. He only offered his judgment when it was asked. And then he was authoritative. He was helped by a fine

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baritone voice whose tone was more convincing than any good argument. When he took over drill we marched for him. He was aimed for Officer Candidate School after basic training. He was a gentleman private who condescended to noncoms. Dewey Carrol scraped low for Witty, recognizing future brass and preparing the ground for handouts. Witty meant to rise and he kept the men in line. He didn't want screwups in any outfit he was in. Anyone who lagged in preparing for inspection got reamed by Witty. He looked like a fighter. He had clever hands. I admired Witty even though he steered shy of me. He was disgusted, I suppose, by my fumbling. Perhaps he didn't want anyone to confuse us. He wanted it made clear that he was a different sort of collegian.

I wasn't liked. That I knew. I didn't know how much until one day, after a speed march, we lined up naked in the latrine, waiting a turn at the shower room. Nine miles in two hours, up a dirt road, one hundred degrees of a naked sun, every man lobster red, first striding in cadence, then jogging, beginning to gasp early in the game, wobbling under the burden of full packs, trailed by an ambulance that inched up on stragglers and accumulated the fallen. I pushed for my shower, grumbling like the rest, but pleased to have outsuffered the whole lot. We called to those already in the shower to hurry it up. Joe Witty, about to enter the shower room, heard only my voice and it triggered his revulsion.

"Step in here and I'll kick the shit out of you."

I followed him into the shower room. It was steamy. We slid along duckboards. Witty shoved me against the wall and hauled back. Then he dropped his fist.

"Why get in trouble over you?"

He said *you* as though I were vermin. When he hauled back to slug me my arms were numb at my sides. I stayed in the shower room after he left. None of the boys looked at me. When I came out Witty was drying himself with a khaki towel.

"Let's go behind the barracks, Witty."

"I'm not getting in trouble over you." He again said *you* in that contemptuous tone.

"You pushed me."

He left the latrine. "He won't fight," I said, but no one was interested in my side of the argument.

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I was so numb that if we'd have gone beyond the barracks I could only have pawed him.

I went to his bed. He was in khaki shorts, putting on khaki socks. He was lean with ropy muscles.

"You pushed me."

"So what?"

"Fight me, Witty."

"Anytime. In the gym. With gloves."

If I'd answered a challenge that way, they'd have put me down as yellow. But in the case of Witty it was just a knight refusing to credit a knave. They were pleased by my humiliation, no mistaking that. It was evident in blank looks when I hunted for support.

I had a friend, Jason Diedrich, a clerk in Headquarters Company. We met in the music room of the post USO. He introduced me to his crew, three Harvard boys, also with Headquarters. They maintained a bookish world in their off-hours. I read *Nightwood* to share their vocabulary. It was a book of loonies. A wise man crawled in woman's clothing. Keening ladies embraced. A queer book, a queer crowd, but I wasn't put off by that queerness. With everything about to crack under that Carolina sun, the book only seemed a foreshadowing.

I went to Jason for relief. "My impulses aren't good," I told him. "Why didn't I swing? I couldn't move. I stood there as if I couldn't be insulted. By the time it gets through to me it's too late. I'm numb."

"Get out of it, Arthur," Jason advised me. He spoke with precision. He deliberated before he spoke. His voice was high-pitched. He wore spectacles, a raw, lumpy face perched on a long throat. I was impressed by his calm. I never found him short of advice. He looked brand-new, only half-made, hair just beginning to sprout on his chin and upper lip. Yet he claimed an ancient tradition. He had a monkish faith in the liberal arts. His model was a Frère Lupus Servatus who preserved Ovid despite a shortage of parchment for more pious work. This monk faked allegiance to boors in order to save what he loved. And Jason, too, wanted to save what he loved. He lapsed into protective shock during the working day, appearing servile and unimportant. After hours he attended to the French symbolist poets. He read Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Valéry, Mallarmé.

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Jason invited me to join their otherwordly retreat at headquarters. He had pull. I, too, could become a clerk. They had a cozy thing going. They had each other during the day. They had their own bedroom in the HQ barracks. To Jason, the war was a holding operation, an intermission between his junior and senior years at Harvard.

I'd invested too much in the war to settle for anything less than combat. I'd so often fantasied my ordeal that to stop now, before anything was proved, would have left me dreamy.

I kept my eye on Witty. He, too, flaunted being a college boy but somehow he didn't antagonize. He led the current events discussion in our Information and Education classes. He rallied us against the traitor, John L. Lewis. Those goldbrick miners were striking for a larger share of the pie while we were stuck in the army getting sixty-five a month. Those slackers were making hay with the girls. That was how Witty, the college boy, saw current events. He lived in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, a fancy place. His father was a big-shot Detroit surgeon. Witty had never worked a day in his life. About women he was very collegiate, copping feels at USO dances. And yet he lectured these red-necks and slum kids about what a rotten deal it was to be deprived the earnings of sweaty labor and other men's wives. He took the words right out of Dewey Carrol's mouth. Dewey Carrol accepted the word of the nobleman. He didn't give any credit to frauds, though, and he clearly spotted me as a fraud.

"You sure do talk, don't you, boy?"

That shrewd peasant. He understood that my gabbiness disguised a lack of grace.

I saw Witty at a USO dance go straight for a hostess who was officer material. He took charge, a confident dancer. He made her dip with him. He swung her out and back. He ended by forcing her arms behind, locking her hands, so that her breasts were shoved against him. He was polished in everything he tried, in contrast to me who couldn't hit a man, shoot a man, bandage or innoculate a man. I was afraid to touch. I knew that I could endure being hit. I didn't want to make the first move though.

Dewey Carrol went to Charleston once a month. "To get my gun off," he explained. That was the medicine Dewey prescribed for growing boys. He took Witty with him one weekend. On their return

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Witty informed the barracks that anyone who couldn't get laid in Charleston didn't have man's equipment. The procedure was to go to a hotel where the bellhops pimped.

So I went to Charleston on a weekend pass. I visited the Citadel. I went to the Battery and looked out on Fort Sumter. I walked through streets garlanded with filigree ironwork. I took a room in a hotel and asked the bellhop for a woman.

"Ten bucks," he said.

"That's too much." He was my age, a shrimp who lacked a chin and was obviously shrewd enough to avoid the draft. He studied me as if he could read my competence. I didn't want to allow him any advantage.

He asked how much I was willing to pay. I told him five dollars.

"I'll see what I can do."

I lay down to kill time and it was more than time that was killed. I could feel the freeze coming over me, the loss of feeling in my skin, in my limbs, numb in the head, all my senses ducking down to my belly and cowering there. I lay in my shorts and saw myself shrivel up. I felt nothing when I touched. I stayed awake all night but no one came. Next morning I left for camp.

The insult was unavenged and that made me fair game for anyone in the bullying line. There was a chunky ambulance driver named Kish. Going over the obstacle course we climbed a wall and he gave me the hip. Then crawling through a concrete tube he butted me with his Neanderthal head.

"What gives?" I asked.

"Move, creep."

There was a tug of war. Kish was on the opposite team. Our anchor man fell and the other boys gave way and we slipped toward the ditch. Then I dug in. I held against their whole team. I held against Kish and three others. They couldn't haul me over. When the rest of my team recovered we pulled Kish and his boys into the ditch.

That night after lights were out I went to Kish's bed and sat down. I said, "Take hold."

"What do you mean?"

"Get any grip you want."

He grabbed me from behind. I braced and heaved and threw

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him over my head and sprawled on him and wrapped my arm around his throat and squeezed until he surrendered.

"You're as strong as any man in this outfit," he said. "You don't have to take crap from Witty."

We were told that when a man's in shock, his face is grey, he's in a cold sweat, his pulse is fluttery, his lips purple. The blood leaves the brain and collects in the solar plexus and elsewhere. Blood vessels collapse. The brain brooks no starving and will perish from the insult. Lift the legs, lower the head. Give plasma to raise the pressure in the veins.

I took the challenge on Witty's terms and we faced each other in a corner of the gym, wearing sixteen-ounce gloves, naked save for GI shorts. I shivered. The blood was in my belly. There was cold sweat on my face despite the heat. The gym was a great shed with naked steel beams, sun dazzling through clerestories. We were beneath an elevated running track. In an opposite corner were mats for wrestlers and tumblers. Several basketball games occupied the center of the gym. Balls pounded, shoes thudded, players called for balls. I heard basket rims vibrate from missed shots.

We circled each other, alone in our corner.

I launched my arms. He jabbed. Wild swings. We circled, clinched, pounded backs. I held tight and gasped. Just before the whistle which summoned us to retreat he hit me hard in the eye with the lacings of his glove and for the first time I felt something and swung with purpose, rapping him on the shoulder, then winding around his neck. It ended in a clinch.

"Okay," Witty said, "it's time."

We didn't shake hands. We walked to the locker room without speaking, both of us breathless.

After the shower I looked in the mirror and saw that he had blacked my eye.

"It's not enough," I told him.

"Anytime you want more," he said.

"Now."

"It's time for retreat."

My eye got worse and by the time we stood retreat I was marked for everyone to see.

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"It's not enough," I told Jason. "I didn't lose. He didn't hurt me. I gave as good as I got. But I'm marked."

Jason told me to stop being foolish. "He's not worthy of you, Arthur. Don't play his game. It's unnecessary to expose yourself." Why did I resist, he wondered, joining my own at Headquarters?

But I didn't want to become queer. I wanted revenge for my eye. Kish who had learned the strength of my arms and so was a friend offered more congenial advice. "Don't go to a gym. Just clobber the stuck-up bastard."

Dewey Carrol stuck me on extra KP and when I complained he said, "We're changing the duty assignments. We're starting at the end of the alphabet." Then why not Witty? They were going to send Witty to a surgical technician's school for a few weeks. Basic training was a waste of time for so talented a kid.

When I got back from KP, I saw Witty entertaining a crowd around his bed. I pushed through.

"What a shame you're leaving, Witty. I hate to see you go. I'll miss you."

"To hell with you," he said, putting the usual stress of contempt on the *you*.

"You're leaving with clear eyes. I wanted a chance to fix that."

Witty jumped up. "Here's your chance now. Do something."

"In back of the barracks."

He led the way out, swaggering for the benefit of the crowd that followed us. They were his partisans. "Finish the job this time, Joe." "Wipe the snot off his face." "Get the other eye, Joe." "Don't forget to shut his mouth for good."

I was bowled over by their ill wishes.

We were stopped at the door by Carrol. He told us to take our trouble to the gym or off the post. He would personally like to see me smeared but being a noncom he had to forgo that pleasure.

Witty was steamed up by their encouragement. "Alright," he said. "Tomorrow. In town. After retreat, you clown. See this?" He held his fist close to my face. "I'm going to shove it down your throat."

"It suits me." I was numb again. They were as offended by me as though they'd stumbled across the root of evil.

Kish said to me afterwards, "You sure don't have friends

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in this outfit." He excepted himself. He was also a foulup, a clumsy, ill-educated loser, an obvious sucker for any malevolent noncom. He was relieved to have another like himself. He saw my defects clearly enough.

"You always knock," he told me.

"I'm not the only one to bitch."

But Kish told me that when I bitched the tone was wrong. "You got a way of getting under a guy's skin."

"How?"

"Like the other night in the PX you're telling me about gas engines. It turns out you don't even know how to drive."

"That's just high school physics."

"And speaking up for niggers."

"Why should we listen to Witty? He's no authority."

"He's no nigger-lover either." Kish had my interests at heart and ticked off my faults and I was convinced. When I thought of meeting Witty the following night I experienced that familiar retreat of my blood to the sanctuary in my belly.

I hunted for Jason to tell him to get me into Headquarters. The Headquarters gang was in the music room, playing the *Liebestod*. They weren't bigots and saved all traditions irrespective of race, creed and nationality. They saved the Kraut, Wagner. They were also interested in African art.

Jason was delighted with my decision. He dreamed of the day when we'd have enough power to unmask ourselves and flail the peasants. I was surprised at his venom. The idea of Dewey Carrol particularly excited Jason. That frail boy was a precocious hater. His voice became shrill, his body stiff when he thought of the beasts who ranked above us. They should be groveling at our feet. He was only twenty years old but knew already how to manipulate authority by pretending to be obsequious. He despised officers and gentlemen. He favored the black heroes of literature such as Iago. He called Lear a gassy old man and praised the bastard Edmund.

Jason's father was a butcher by trade, a taciturn, abstracted man who came alive in bursts of violence. He once accused Jason's sister of being a whore and pursued her with a cleaver. She jumped from the second floor window and shattered her ankles. That butcher didn't

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trifle with Jason though. Jason was delicate but ferocious. A Harvard scholarship rescued him from his family.

He dreamed of a day when our kind would be able to force a redress of grievances. As for now, he was willing to settle for invisibility. We had a vantage point in the music room from which we could see each other. That was enough.

"Get me in, Jason," I told him. "I don't want any war."

The next day, while I was out on rifle range duty, Jason got the transfer underway. The rifle range was a lazy job for a medic. I took off my kits and lay under a tree while the men fired at targets. When they got up from the firing line they staggered. The heat and noise were stunning. On the right was Battle Village, surrounded by mine fields and barbed wire. Men wiggled beneath the barbed wire. Machine guns fired overhead. Dynamite blasts simulated artillery. Afterwards the GI's charged the mocked-up village, firing at false fronts. Dummies in windows represented snipers. Immobilized vintage tanks gave bazooka teams a target.

With these cozy sounds of battle as background, I sent my dreams ahead to scout the terrain of war. I dreamed of what would happen if someone should cry, "Aid man!" I'd hook up my pistol belt, run toward the wounded man, dodging shellfire, my hands on my kits to keep them from flapping. That action was imaginable. I could face shellfire. When I reached the wounded man, I'd look. And then what? What if it was a chest wound, the cavity penetrated, the lungs collapsed? Plug up the hole. With what? What if the bandages didn't fit? What if an artery were severed? Walk away and let him die. I didn't have the knack of finding pulses or pressure points. My hands lost their feeling. Use a tourniquet. A tourniquet tied too long meant gangrene. Any move of mine risked another man's life. I was unfit for that responsibility. Let them send for Witty or Dewey Carrol. They'd plug up the hole. They'd stop the bleeding. They had sure hands. After retreat those sure hands of Joe Witty's would clobber me. Then I'd withdraw to the music room and listen to Wagner and hold out till the end of the war as a clerk. Everyone would be better off.

Someone shrieked. "Aid Man!" Then again, "AID MAN!" I was almost asleep and dreamy and had imagined just this call, just this screechy, desperate wail and I didn't jump up, but turned on

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an elbow and looked toward Battle Village. The dynamite blasts had stopped. The machine gun had stopped. I saw a GI running across the fields, tumbling in shell holes, running with wild arms. He waved to me. "AID MAN!" Raging, as though I'd done something terrible. I shivered. I stood numb as he ran up to me. He shouted in my face, "AID MAN!" He grabbed my shoulders, his mouth agape, heaving air, his eyes big, his pupils dilated, his face grey, a trim platoon Sergeant from C Company with a fox face, one of the permanent cadre who had been to Ranger school and, it was said, could jog fifteen miles without showing the strain.

"A man got his leg blowed off. Let's go."

I woke the ambulance driver. We drove across the field toward Battle Village.

A squad leader had tripped into a hole just as a dynamite charge exploded. The Sergeant said, "His leg's off."

"Off?"

"His foot's in the shoe."

The ambulance launched off ruts, slammed down on the field, the carriage groaning. The ambulance driver, saucer-eyed behind his spectacles, his teeth clicking, hit every furrow and we bounced high. My kits slammed my thighs. Men were clustered at the side of a shell hole. We almost drove into them.

A lieutenant crouched over the screaming man who was covered with a blanket. They stepped aside for me. I saw a shoe some distance away. I pulled back the blanket and looked. He reared and bucked. Gone at the calf. The skin pulled back up the leg, showing the shreds of flesh. A hot, shitty smell. The skin above was peppered. A tourniquet was tied above the knee. I untied the tourniquet and blood spurted on the blanket. I could see raw flesh, gristle, the artery gulping, the veins pinched shut. I retied the tourniquet. No spurt of blood now. A slow welling. The scissors came out and I cut away the pant leg. The syrette came out. I thrust the plunger into the hollow needle and broke the seal. I jammed the needle into his thigh and squeezed it out like toothpaste. I bent down and got a good smell of the stump. He was under my hand. I could feel the muscles jumping. My hand was slimy where I'd touched the blanket.

We lifted him on a stretcher into the ambulance.

The ambulance driver went fast, hitting everything. I tried to figure out how to cover the stump. When I raised the leg to get the

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bandage-roll underneath he screamed. I yelled at the driver to slow down.

I took out a belly compress and placed it over the stump and looped the strings around the upper calf.

He screeched, "My balls!"

I cut away the pants and looked at his balls. Darts of powder peppered the sac and the surrounding flesh.

I told him, "You're alright."

They were waiting for us at the post hospital with a stretcher on wheels. Four orderlies carried him from the ambulance. A white smocked doctor lifted the belly compress as they wheeled him toward emergency.

"I gave him morphine," I called after them. "An eighth of a grain." They were already inside when I remembered that I had forgotten to fill out the tag. Describe the wound, its treatment, give your name, rank, serial number and medical organization.

The ambulance driver said, "You did great."

We returned to the rifle range but the day was finished.

They had heard back at battalion. The lieutenant who tied the tourniquet had called to praise me.

Our CO, a southern doctor, slapped my back. "Nice going, boy."

Kish wanted to know what happened to the foot.

It was all so dreamy. I'd made him scream in the ambulance. The belly compress hadn't been neatly tied. I looped the free strings over his leg and fumbled with the knot. A lousy job. And yet they were awed by my audacity. I had looked at the stump and wasn't altered by the sight.

"I'm ready," I told Joe Witty after retreat.

He invited me to the PX for a beer. "I understand you did a great job out there." He was boyish and charming. "I hear the leg was off. Entirely off. That takes a lot of guts, Artie. Nice going, buddy." He tapped my arm with his fist.

"We were going to fight."

"Listen," he said, his Irish face ruddy with sincerity, "I owe you an apology." His hand reached for mine and before I could prevent it, my hand engaged his.

I had a bloody field jacket. That was good enough credentials for Joe Witty. I was a bona fide medic, a soldier. What had been

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put down as big talk was now reevaluated. I was to be accepted on different terms.

Witty even became collegiate with me, spoke of campus life, wanted to sing an old Ann Arbor tune. This hard-chinned Irish boy was crammed to the brim with nostalgia. "Remember the old P-Bell on Saturday nights, Artie?" He talked as if we owned a common experience.

What a disappointment this moment I'd dreamed of in the PX. The dream of a villain had owned my fantasies. My desperate condition was remedied by something so trivial as a good word and a slap on the back. We drank beer in the PX and Witty advertised me as a credit to the battalion. He was no more adequate as a friend than as a villain. I had allowed him to black my eye. I had been numb in his presence. And now it was clear that he was only a fool.

"You got to pay for my eye," I told him. I interrupted him at his mellowest. "It's after retreat. I'm ready."

He reached for my hand again. "Listen, old buddy, I'm really and truly sorry about that. It was an accident."

"But there it is, Witty. An eye for an eye."

He told me that it had been accident. A lucky punch. "It was more of a backhand than a punch. I didn't even hit you right."

I pushed Witty against the counter of the PX. The men circled us. Someone yelled, "Break it up."

"Hey now," Witty said, "what gives?" But he didn't raise his hands to protect himself. I hauled back my fist but couldn't hit.

"And who wants to get in trouble over *you*?" I asked.

He came after me, caught my arm. "I know you're sore," he said. "You have every right to be. How can I convince you that I *really* am sorry? *Really*." And in front of the men we shook hands again.

He was a coward and a fool. Like myself.

I had squeezed a bloody stump and vanquished Joe Witty. What achievement was that? Still, I didn't need to withdraw to the music room. I had earned the right to follow my dreams into combat and there confront the dying and wait for my own death to swoop down on me, hoping that in the penultimate moment I'd come out of shock and scream bloody murder.

I can't begin to tell you what a disappointment it was.

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Michel Butor

SCIENCE FICTION:
The Crisis of Its Growth

I

If the genre Science Fiction is rather difficult to define—disputes among the experts afford superabundant proof of that—it is, at least, one of the easiest to designate. It is enough to say: "You know, those stories that are always mentioning interplanetary rockets," for the least-prepared interlocutor to understand immediately what you mean. This does not imply that any such apparatus occurs in every SF story; it may be replaced by other accessories which will perform a comparable role. But it is the most usual, the typical example, like the magic wand in fairy tales.

Two remarks are immediately relevant:

1. There exists for the moment no interplanetary rocket. If there ever has been one, or there is one now, the ordinary reader knows nothing about it. A narrative in which a device of this kind occurs is therefore a narrative of fantasy.

2. But we all believe quite firmly that such devices will soon exist, that the question is no more than one of time—a few years of development. The apparatus is possible. This notion is fundamental, and requires some explanation.

It might be claimed that for the Arab storytellers, who believed in the power of magicians, flying carpets were also "possible." But for most of us, the possibility of rockets is of an altogether different order. It is guaranteed by what we might call, by and large, *modern science*, a sum of doctrines whose validity no serious Occidental dares to question.

If the author of a narrative has taken the trouble to introduce such a device, it is because he chooses to depart from reality only to a certain degree, he wants to prolong, to extend reality, but not to be separated from it. He wants to give us an impression of realism, he wants to insert the imaginary into the real, anticipating results already achieved. Such a narrative naturally situates its action in the future.

We can imagine, taking modern science in its broadest acceptation, not only other devices, but technologies of all kinds—psychological,

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pedagogical, social, etc. . . . This scientific guarantee may become increasingly loose, but it nonetheless constitutes the definable specificity of SF: a literature which explores the range of the possible, as science permits us to envision it.

It is, then, a fantasy framed by a realism.

The work of Jules Verne is the best example of SF to the first degree, which is justified by the results achieved and which uniquely anticipates certain applications. Wells inaugurates a SF to the second degree, much more audacious but much less convincing, which anticipates the results themselves. He lets us assume behind Cavor's machine, which will take the first men to the moon, an explanation of a scientific type, one that conforms to a *possible* science which will develop from the science of his time.

II

The SF tourist agencies offer their customers three main types of spectacles which we can group under the following rubrics: life in the future, unknown worlds, unexpected visitors.

1) Life in the future

We start from the world as we know it, from the society which surrounds us. We introduce a certain number of changes whose consequences we attempt to foresee. By a projection into the future, we open up the complexity of the present, we develop certain still larval aspects. SF of this type is a remarkable instrument of investigation in the tradition of Swift. It readily assumes a satiric aspect. We shall find excellent examples in the works of Huxley (*Brave New World*), Orwell (*1984*), Werfel (*Star of the Unborn*), Hesse (*Magister Ludi*), Bradbury, etc.

2) Unknown worlds

It suffices to mention the name Ray Bradbury, whose best-known work is called *The Martian Chronicles,* to see that an altogether different element occurs here, almost of necessity.

Technological progress has for its goal not only the transformation of our daily life, but also the satisfaction of our curiosity. The new instruments, the new sciences must allow us to discover domains of reality which are hidden from us today. Within the scientific representation of the world, there are enormous districts which our imagination is free to populate with strange beings and landscapes according to its whim,

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subject to several very broad restrictions. Here we can project our dreams.

This aspect of SF links up with a very respectable tradition. Dante, when he locates his inferno inside the globe, his purgatory at the antipodes and his paradise in the stars, is merely projecting his theology, and a good deal more, into the empty spaces which medieval cosmology reserved.

Thus Verne scrupulously inventoried the lacunae of the geography of his age and filled them with myths inscribed within the extension of the known facts, achieving a synthesis which strikes us as naïve but which by its breadth and harmony outstrips anything his successors have attempted.

When an author of the eighteenth century wanted to give his story some appearance of reality, he had a ready-made site in which to locate it: the islands of the Pacific. (*Cf.* Diderot: *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage.*) Today, when the exploration of the earth's surface is quite advanced, we prefer to locate our islands in the sky. But if we once knew nothing, of course, of the archipelagos which had not yet been discovered, we were at least quite sure that apart from certain remarkable peculiarities they could not be very different from those we knew already. We were still on the same Earth, with the same general conditions.

On the contrary, the little we know today about the islands in the sky proves to us that everything must be very different there. We know that gravity is more powerful on Venus, less powerful on Mars, than on Earth, etc. These several elements oblige the writer who respects them to make an enormous effort of imagination, force him to invent something truly new. Unfortunately, the creation of another "nature," even when based on elementary information, is a task so arduous that no author, so far, has undertaken it methodically.

In order not to acknowledge ourselves vanquished, we raise our sights: instead of describing what might happen on Mars and Venus, we leap at once to the third planet of the *Epsilon* system of the Swan, or else, since in fact there is nothing to stop us once we have started on this path, planet *n* of star *n* in galaxy *n*. At first the reader is impressed by these cascades of light years; the solar system was certainly a wretched little village, here we are launched into the universe *at large*. But he soon realizes that these ultra-remote planets resemble the earth much more than they do its neighbors. Out of the immense number of stars which populate space, it is always permissible to imagine one on which the conditions of life are very close to those we know. The authors have rediscovered the islands of the eighteenth century. They employ a vaguely

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scientific jargon and decorate the sky with charming fantasies; the trick is turned.

This infinite freedom is a false freedom. If we flee infinitely far into space or time, we shall find ourselves in a region where everything is possible, where the imagination will no longer even need to make an effort of coordination. The result will be an impoverished duplication of everyday reality. We are told of an enormous war between galactic civilizations, but we see at once that the league of the democratic planets strangely resembles the UN, the empire of the nebula Andromeda stands for the Soviet Union as a subscriber to *Reader's Digest* might conceive that nation, and so on. The author has merely translated into SF language a newspaper article he read the night before. Had he remained on Mars, he would have been obliged to invent something.

At its best moments, the SF that describes unknown worlds becomes an instrument of an extreme flexibility, thanks to which all kinds of political and moral fables, of fairy tales, of myths, can be transposed and adapted to modern readers. Anticipation has created a language by whose aid we can in principle examine everything.

3) Unexpected visitors

The description of unknown worlds, in SF, necessarily becomes part of our anticipation, however rudimentary it may be; it is natural that it should affect that anticipation. It is not so much by the improvement of commercial relations that the invention of the compass transformed the Old World, but by the discovery of America. The description of unknown worlds and beings involves the description of their intervention in the future history of humanity.

We can easily imagine that the inhabitants of other planets have a civilization in advance of our own, hence that they have a realm of action superior to our own, that they are ahead of us in discovery.

All of space becomes threatening; strange beings may intervene even before we know of their existence. Most of the pre-Columbians had no expectation that a deadly invasion would come out of the East.

It is in Wells's *War of the Worlds* that we encounter this theme for the first time, and his countless imitators have not added much to it. It is a profoundly modern theme (it never occurred to anyone in the sixteenth century that Europe might be discovered in its turn) and an extremely powerful one (as several memorable radio broadcasts have demonstrated).

Thanks to this notion of intervention, SF can assimilate those aspects of the fantastic which at first seem most opposed to it: all that we

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might classify under the heading: "Superstitions."

In the *Divine Comedy,* Beatrice transports Dante from planet to planet; in Father Kircher's *Iter Extaticum,* an angel does the job; we are not yet in SF, which implies that the journey is made as a result of techniques developed by man. But these techniques will allow us to enter into contact with beings to whom we can attribute knowledge we do not possess, techniques we do not understand. It might, of course, occur to one of them to come to Earth, to carry off one of *us* and transport him elsewhere by means which there is no longer any need to explain. The difference between such a being and Kircher's angel becomes infinitesimal; only the language has changed. As a matter of fact, it is necessary today, in order to gain a sufficient suspension of disbelief, that the being be described in the same way as a being that man might have discovered on another planet. Thus we could unite within SF all the narratives of phantoms and demons, all the old myths dealing with superior beings which intervene in the life of men. Certain tales by H. P. Lovecraft illustrate this possibility.

C. S. Lewis begins his curious antimodern trilogy with a novel which has all of SF's characteristics: *Out of the Silent Planet.* Two wicked scientists transport a young philologist to Mars by means of a spaceship furnished with every modern convenience. In the second volume, *Perelandra,* the author drops his mask: it is an angel who transports the philologist to Venus; as for the scientists, they are Satan's henchmen.

III

We see that all kinds of merchandise can be sold under the label SF; and that all kinds of merchandise seek to be packaged under this label. Hence it seems that SF represents the normal form of mythology in our time: a form which is not only capable of revealing profoundly new themes, but capable of integrating all the themes of the old literature.

Despite several splendid successes, we cannot help thinking that SF is keeping very few of its promises.

This is because SF, by extending itself, is denaturing itself; it is gradually losing its specificity. It furnishes a very particular element of credibility; this element is increasingly weakened when it is utilized without discernment. SF is fragile, and the enormous circulation it has achieved in recent years merely renders it more so.

We have already noted that the flight to ultra-distant planets and epochs, which seems at first glance a conquest, actually masks the authors' incapacity to imagine in a coherent fashion, in conformity with the

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requirements of "science," the planets or the epochs which are closer at hand. Similarly the divination of a future science affords, surely, a great freedom, but we soon discover that it is above all a revenge of the authors against their incapacity to master the entire range of contemporary science.

The day is long past when an Aristotle could be the first researcher of his age in every domain, and the day when a Pico could claim to defend a thesis *De Omni Re Scibili*; but the day is almost past when a Verne could easily handle the notions implied in all the technological applications achieved in his age, and anticipate other applications while remaining perfectly clear to the high school students who formed his public.

Today the notions implied in devices as common as a radio set or an atomic bomb exceed by a good deal the average reader's level of scientific culture. He uses without understanding; he accepts without asking explanations; and the author takes advantage of this situation, which frequently causes him to multiply his blunders, for he too generally lacks a sufficient knowledge of the notions he is obliged to use or else seem backward, a grave possibility when one is claiming to reveal the mysteries of two hundred thousand years hence.

As a result SF, which should derive the greatest part of its prestige from its precision, remains vague. The story does not truly manage to *take shape*. And when the scientists themselves begin writing, they quite often prove their ignorance of the disciplines unfamiliar to them and their difficulty in vulgarizing their specialty.

SF is distinguished from the other genres of the fantastic by the special kind of plausibility it introduces. This plausibility is in direct proportion to the solid scientific elements the author introduces. If they fail, SF becomes a dead form, a stereotype.

IV

Hence we understand why few authors risk specifying the details of their image of a transformed world. It is an undertaking, indeed, which supposes not only a scientific culture far above the average, but also a knowledge of present reality comparable to that supposed by a novel of the realistic type, and finally an enormous effort of coordination. The author is generally content to evoke a future world "in general," one which might just as well be located in 1975 as in 19750, a world characterized by the widespread use of plastic substances, of television and of atomic-powered rockets. It is within this setting that he will briefly

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develop what is often a highly ingenious idea. In another tale, he will use this same background in order to develop another idea, without taking the trouble to coordinate them. The result is an infinity of variously sketched futures, all independent of one another and generally contradictory. We shall have, in the same way, an infinity of Venuses, each of which diminishes the plausibility of the rest.

This dispersion has monotony as its direct consequence, for the authors, since they renounce constructing systematically, can describe only in a rudimentary fashion and depart only slightly from banality.

It appears that SF has begun with the cake. It had things too much its own way: it was once enough to mention Martians to enthrall the reader. But the time has come when the reader will notice that most of these monsters, despite their crests, their tentacles, their scales, are much less different from the average American than an ordinary Mexican. SF has cut the grass under its own feet, has spoiled thousands of ideas. The doors have been thrown open to start on a great quest, and we discover we are still walking round and round the house. If the authors scamp their texts, it is because they realize that an effort to improve them would lead to an impasse.

The SF narratives derive their power from a great collective dream we are having, but for the moment they are incapable of giving it a unified form. It is a mythology in tatters, impotent, unable to orient our action in any precise way.

V

But the last word has not been said, and it is certainly possible that SF will surmount this crisis in its growth.

It has the power to solicit our belief in an entirely new way, and it is capable of affording, in its description of the possible, a marvelous precision. But to realize its full power, it must undergo a revolution, it must succeed in unifying itself. It must become a collective work, like the science which is its indispensable basis.

We all dream of clean, well-lighted cities, so that when an author situates a narrative in such a place, he is certain of striking a sympathetic note. But we find ourselves, in the present state of SF, facing an enormous choice of barely sketched future cities among which the imagination hesitates, unsatisfied.

Everyone knows Heraclitus' famous fragment: "Those who are awakened are in the same world, but those who sleep are each in a separate world." Our dreamers' worlds are simultaneously without com-

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munication and very much like one another. The classical mythologies united the common elements of these dreams into unique and public myths.

Now let us imagine that a certain number of authors, instead of describing at random and quite rapidly certain more or less interchangeable cities, were to take as the setting of their stories a single city, named and situated with some precision in space and in future time; that each author were to take into account the descriptions given by the others in order to introduce his own new ideas. This city would become a common possession to the same degree as an ancient city that has vanished; gradually, all readers would give its name to the city of their dreams and would model that city in its image.

SF, if it could limit and unify itself, would be capable of acquiring over the individual imagination a constraining power comparable to that of any classical mythology. Soon *all* authors would be obliged to take this predicted city into account, readers would organize their actions in relation to its imminent existence, ultimately they would find themselves obliged to build it. Then SF would be veracious, to the very degree that it realized itself.

It is easy to see what a prodigious instrument of liberation or oppression it could become.

(Translated from the French by Richard Howard)

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An Interview by James T. Valliere

DE KOONING ON POLLOCK

VALLIERE: In 1942 you and Pollock exhibited along with others in a show called "French and American Painters." It was held at the McMillen Gallery.

DE KOONING: Yes. It was a very little show — not outstanding. The critics liked it and were sympathetic so it was written up nicely. The Americans looked very good; they were different from one another, but nobody paid attention. It was not like today. People just weren't buying American painting.

VALLIERE: But why were a group of almost completely unknown Americans like yourself, Pollock and Lee Krasner shown with highly recognized Europeans — Picasso, Braque, Rouault, etc.?

DE KOONING: Because of John Graham. The owner of the McMillen Gallery asked him to arrange an exhibition and he picked us. Graham was very highly regarded. He had written a book called the *Dialectics of Art*. Also, Graham, Stuart Davis and Arshile Gorky at that time were known as the Three Musketeers. They were the three outstanding modern artists. Graham was very important and he discovered Pollock. I make that very clear. It wasn't anybody else, you know.

VALLIERE: You think Graham discovered Pollock?

DE KOONING: Of course he did. Who the hell picked him out? The other critics came later — much later. Graham was a painter as well as a critic. It was hard for other artists to see what Pollock was doing — their work was so different from his. It's hard to see something that's different from your work. But Graham could see it.

VALLIERE: Had you ever seen any of Pollock's work before the McMillen exhibition?

DE KOONING: No. That was the first time. Pollock was about nine or ten years younger than I. I knew Graham as early as 1927 and through him met Gorky and Davis; but I got to know Pollock only after the group show at McMillen.

VALLIERE: After you knew him did you speak about painting very often?

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DE KOONING: No, not much conversation. He didn't like to talk. I remember that Mercedes Matter once told me a story of how Pollock and her husband Herbert met when Lee and Jackson had them to dinner. Jackson and Herbert spoke a little to each other upstairs and when they came down they just sat for the rest of the night. Not a word was said. When they left, Jackson told Lee that Herbert was a "nice man, a nice fellow." Mercedes said Herbert said the same thing about Jackson. They were each taken with the other — they had a nice feeling between them. They didn't have to talk.

VALLIERE: What about the Club? Was Pollock involved in that?

DE KOONING: No. That started after Pollock had moved out to East Hampton. He was very suspicious of it.

VALLIERE: Why was he suspicious of it?

DE KOONING: The Club was always misunderstood. We always wanted not exactly to start a club but to have a loft and for years I had it in mind. The Greeks and Italians each have their own social clubs along Eighth Avenue. We didn't want to have anything to do with art. We just wanted to get a loft, instead of sitting in those god-damned cafeterias. One night we decided to do it — we got up twenty charter members who each gave ten dollars and found a place on Eighth Street. We would go there at night, have coffee, a few drinks, chew the rag. We tried but couldn't get a name so we called it the Club.

VALLIERE: Pollock didn't like that.

DE KOONING: He was suspicious of any intellectual talk. He couldn't do it — at least not while he was sober. But he was smart though — oh boy — because when he was half-loaded, that in-between period, he was good, very good, very provocative. But he had contempt for people who talked — people who taught.

VALLIERE: But don't you think that might have been part of his belief that art could not be taught and only phonies tried?

DE KOONING: Maybe. He never taught, although many of us had to, and he felt superior about that. He felt that he was a very important artist and that most of us weren't so hot.

VALLIERE: He tried to make it known that he was *the* painter?

DE KOONING: Oh yes. He was *it*. A couple of times he told me, "You know more, but I feel more." I was jealous of him — his talent. But he was a remarkable person. He'd do things that were so terrific.

After a while we only used the Club on Friday and Saturday nights. The rest of the time we'd all go to the Cedar Bar as we were drinking more then. So when Pollock was in town he'd come to the

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Cedar too. He had this way of sizing up new people very quickly. We'd be sitting at a table and some young fellow would come in. Pollock wouldn't even look at him, he'd just nod his head — like a cowboy — as if to say, "fuck-off." That was his favorite expression — "Fuck-off." It was really funny, he wouldn't even look at him. He had that cowboy style. It's an American quality with artists and writers. They feel that they have to be very manly.

VALLIERE: I've heard that you wrestled with him at the Cedar Bar.

DE KOONING: Oh yes. It was a joke, very friendly. He'd go berserk — like a child — a small boy. We'd run, fight, jump on each other. Such joy, such desperate joy.

But there was another side of him too. When he had money he spent it and he began to dress with a great style. He had a nice physique — tall with muscular arms that hung away from his body. Tweed suits looked very good on him.

Franz Kline told me a story about one day when Pollock came by all dressed up. He was going to take Franz to lunch — they were going to a fancy place. Half-way through the meal Pollock noticed that Franz's glass was empty. He said, "Franz have some more wine." He filled the glass and became so involved in watching the wine pour out of the bottle that he emptied the whole bottle. It covered the food, the table, everything. He said, "Franz have some more wine." Like a child he thought it was a terrific idea — all that wine going all over. Then he took the four corners of the table cloth — picked it up and set it on the floor. In front of all those people! He put the goddamn thing on the floor — paid for it and they let him go. Wonderful that he could do that. Those waiters didn't take any shit and there was a guy at the door and everything. It was such an emotion — such life.

Another time we were at Franz's place. Fantastic. It was small, very warm and packed with people drinking. The windows were little panes of glass. Pollock looked at this guy and said "You need a little more air" and he punched a window out with his fist. At the moment it was so delicious — so belligerent. Like children we broke all the windows. To do things like that. Terrific.

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YUGOSLAV REPORT

THREE GENERATIONS

There is no shortage of brave men in Yugoslavia. But the quality of courage that inspired Djilas' *mea culpa*, offered up at a time when he was still heir-apparent at the height of his power, quite deliberately damning his own future along with all the other fruits of hard-won victory, was of an order rare even among Montenegrins. There lingers about it, faint but unmistakable, the odor of incense and of self-immolation — a faith victorious, and of the victor calmly proceeding to disembowel himself for the sake of truth. The fact that Djilas can by no stretch of the imagination be regarded as a saint detracts neither from his deed nor from his image.

His release on parole — a move tactical rather than legal and like the earlier trials, convictions and pardons, dictated exclusively by political considerations — is unlikely to detract from that image. Djilas remains the no-sayer, the radical par excellence, and as such his presence is more pervasive today than it was in the thirties when, poet turned commissar, an inflexible fanatic in a dirty raincoat, he rose from student leader to Partisan general and Vice-President of the Federal Republic.

For years his very name in Yugoslavia was an awkward silence between quotes, the more awkward for being in strange contrast to the open and unrestrained criticism that generally prevails. People air their feelings in public, without restraint and at the top of their lungs. Students rip into the inanities and injustices of an educational system still hobbled by politics and petty intrigue — dogmatic professors, irrelevant courses, cost-of-living stipends (tuition itself is free) allotted on the basis of pull rather than ability. "Partisan hero?" sneered the one efficient salesgirl I encountered. "That's not a title; that's an excuse. For being incompetent." The atmosphere is relaxed and quite boisterously unsubdued; and most of the outward trappings of police-state terror, which were conspicuous as far back as 1928, when King Alexander first dissolved parliament and proclaimed a military dictatorship, are no longer apparent except for the gargoyle faces of the uniformed cops, an

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army of lantern-jawed scarecrows recruited and trained in a now all-but-forgotten age.

Or so it seems. Are they meant to serve as a constant reminder — *memento mori*?

If so, they would seem quite superfluous. The underground strains and fissures, the subterranean rumbles and tensions may elude foreign tourists in Dubrovnik or Bled, but to the natives they are inescapable. The eloquent silence evoked almost everywhere in Yugoslavia by any reference to Djilas is a tribute both to him and to his enemies — to his spirit and to the commonsensical cunning of those who ordered him jailed or pardoned in accordance with the exigencies of foreign or domestic politics.

For with a pragmatic adaptability born of perennial crises the Yugoslav communists improvised some of the techniques of democratic government, just as earlier they had improvised communism. They were among the first totalitarians to realize that letting barroom critics shoot their mouths off is a cheap way to provide a safety valve, check on the level of hostility and keep jail space available for cases of hard-core opposition. Still, the earlier methods have left their mark, and one knows instinctively where to draw the line. The wise man draws it around Djilas; the one who doesn't is likely to be a stoolpigeon. (Mihajlov last year broke with the tradition and spoke out publicly for Djilas; he is still in jail as of this writing.)

The limits of this practical tolerance were until recently set by the man who, in the contemporary reenactment of the ancient Balkan charade, symbolized Djilas' shadow. Alexander Rankovich was a natural for the role and played it to perfection — the conspirator as top cop, outconspiring even the Soviet MVD. But times change, and Rankovich did not, although he tried. Instead of sniffing out Tito's enemies, he began to concentrate on Tito's friends, assembling dossiers for use as blackmail, exploiting a revival of Serb nationalism and resumption of all the old regional feuds along with some new ones in order to build his own party machine. Through a campaign of intrigue and innuendo he succeeded in sidetracking his one serious rival, the somewhat pedestrian and lacklustre but far more capable Kardelj.

What ultimately wrecked his plot was not premature ambition so much as primitive ignorance. The totalitarian state leads, among other things, to economic disaster; salvaging what was left and trying to catch up with the twentieth century is a task which transcends the ability and scope of a Balkan-league J. Edgar Hoover. Younger men, technicians trained in the complexities of at least the industrial, if not the computer

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age, will have to take over; among the old guard only Svetozar Vukmanovic and Dr. Vladimir Bakaric seem equipped to deal with problems of this magnitude. (Bakaric, secretary of the Croatian CP, is a trained economist of pre-World War II vintage; Vukmanovic, a fifty-four-year-old Montenegrin, is a supremely able organizer who managed that rare feat, a transfer of talent from conspiracy and Partisan warfare to economic development. Both men were constantly at odds with Rankovich's Serbian Secret Service.)

Then there is Miroslav Krleza.

Krleza has been a Great Classic for so long that to come face to face with him, very much alive and as busy as ever, is something of a shock, rather like walking into the offices of Gallimard and running into Victor Hugo.

Krleza has no use for either Djilas or technocracy and is most outspoken about his likes and dislikes, has been outspoken for the past half-century in a steady stream of plays, novels, essays and poems that together constitute the most impressive body of work in twentieth-century Yugoslav literature. That he is all but unknown in the West (though he has been nominated repeatedly for the Nobel Prize) reflects in part the ignorance and provincialism of incestuous intellectual cliques; yet his own ambiguities and conflicts, which extend the range of his work, also contribute to his relative obscurity. He is a relentless, meticulous realist who created his own myth and then proceeded not only to describe it but to live in it with all the furious passion of a visionary, while simultaneously protecting — perhaps overprotecting — body and vision by a stance of ironic detachment that is part of his heritage — the illegitimate heritage of a Croat born and raised in the ambivalent twilight culture of the dying Habsburg empire.

A living classic, then; but in the years between the two World Wars he had been oracle and revelation as well. Even his enemies conceded him stature; the rest regarded him as Yugoslavia's foremost literary figure. Yet his books were banned, his plays could not be performed in public and only an occasional essay would slip past the censor in more or less castrated form. The underground circulation of his writings might have been sufficient to maintain his artistic reputation; persecution, however, turned him into a legend, a black cloud on Parnassus hurling bolts of savage wit into the vale of idiocy below.

So that going to see him now raised ghosts.

The boy who first converted me to Krleza was sixteen and a poet; he died at twenty-one in an assault on a Gestapo prison, leaving

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behind him a plaque with his name on a tree-shaded Belgrade street. *His* Krleza was the synthesis of poetry and revolution, of Slavic fervor and Western aesthetics, a romantic realist equally uncompromising in his literary standards and his political idealism. What seems remarkable, at this remove, is that our evaluation reflected not only our search for God and father but also a sound measure of objective standards. In those days, to be caught with a Krleza novel almost inevitably meant jail and a beating at the very least, a risk not conducive to dispassionate criticism. And yet, on rereading him in middle age and at a time when anything goes and nothing matters, I still agree in essence with our youthful judgment.

Born in 1893, a Croat raised to be a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army (he graduated from the Honved Military Academy in Budapest), Krleza first lived through the long moment of graveyard quiet in which smoldering decay and corruption built up to disaster — the collapse of the empire, the death of faith and the abortion of the brave new world.

Galicia, his first play, written after the end of the war, already sounds the major themes and variations. Set in an Austrian base camp at the Russian front (where Krleza himself spent the war years), it centers on a Croatian officer who, acting against his conscience, carries out orders to execute a peasant woman accused of having insulted the wife of an Austrian general and then expiates his guilt and moral responsibility in an orgy of remorse, murder and suicide that settles all scores even if it leaves open a number of questions. Despite expressionist trappings and an excess of both rhetoric and gore the drama is no ordinary period piece; the issue of individual guilt aside, Krleza's vision of the military mind in action and of the boundless potential for cruelty inherent in power at any level seems, in fact, both uncomfortably topical and gruesomely prophetic. Moreover, for all its fustian and polemics it already has the vigor and sparkle characteristic of Krleza's style.

Characteristic, too, was the fate of the play — banned one hour before its scheduled opening. This in 1920, i.e., no longer in Austrian-occupied Agram but in independent Yugoslav Zagreb. The political changes turned out to have been superficial, a matter of certain administrative readjustments; the end of the Habsburgs and the dismemberment of their empire proved mere symptoms of a plague already far beyond any such palliative measures, and Krleza, though certainly in favor of independence, did not mistake it for an end in itself. *Golgota,* his first play to reach the stage, opened in 1922. In terms and technique not unlike the early O'Casey, it deals with a strike betrayed by one of

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its leaders, and for the first time openly proclaims Krleza's socialist sympathies—and his was a sympathy rather than an unconditional surrender; he for one continued to distinguish between cures and panaceas. That commitment, all the more basic for being undogmatic, informs most of his subsequent work and accounts to a great extent for the unremitting harassment that followed. His books were automatically banned as fast as they came off the presses; but if persecution distorted his public image (he was either martyr or agitator), it failed to diminish his output or its stature. The *Glembajev* trilogy, a family chronicle tracing in intricate detail the reverberations of social upheaval in individual lives, and novels such as *The Croatian God Mars, Banquet at Blitva, The Return of Fillip Ladinovic* (the only one of his books translated into English) and *Mind's Edge* are works in the mainstream of European (or more specifically Central European) literature; their thrust comes not from Krleza's politics but from the radical humanitarianism that shaped his political outlook.

Positions independently arrived at are lonely perches more often than not. Krleza's wide-ranging concerns and radical bias set him apart from the very writers of his generation with whom by nature and nurture he had most in common (the Germans and Austrians, from the turn of the century to 1933), and at the same time also increasingly tended to cut him off from important parts of his public at home. To the Communist intellectuals of the thirties who dominated the Yugoslav cultural scene, Krleza's iconoclasm represented a disconcerting challenge; what, for instance, were they to make of a professed socialist who ridiculed the very notion of socialist art, not to mention socialist realism?

What they were to make of him had, of course, long since been decided elsewhere. The young brave picked to wield the hatchet happened to be Milovan Djilas, at that time the Party's culture commissar and most vituperative polemicist. Djilas attacked with his customary reckless courage; but for once the victim struck back and in a spectacular battle routed his would-be executioner.

For the sensitive writer, with his moral scruples and liberal prejudices, turned out to be a nasty in-fighter. In both his fiction and his essays he had already proved a formidable polemicist; moreover, he possessed in abundance what Djilas lacked altogether — erudition, and a sense of humor. Cunningly paraphrasing Lenin, he lured the unwary commissar into attacking his own patron saint and then proceeded with indecent gusto to tear him to shreds.

The breach between the two men never healed and came to have

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far-reaching consequences for both. Its immediate effect was to accentuate Krleza's isolation to the point where he found himself cut off from the Communists, and it seems at least plausible to assume that this is what kept him from joining the Partisan movement and taking to the woods when the time came. There may, of course, have been other reasons as well; but the fact remains that Yugoslavia's foremost left-wing writer and intellectual sat out the war in Zagreb while Tito's Partisans appointed Vladimir Nazor, a patriotic octogenarian rhymster, as their poet laureate.

Zagreb, where Krleza was born in 1893 and has been living with interruptions ever since, is to this day a sleepy provincial town irretrievably lost in the brackish backwaters of nineteenth-century Austria. Imitation grandeur has given way to shabby functionalism, egalitarian but somehow still striving to appear genteel. The stolid burghers turned into pseudoproletarians cling to their briefcases and pretensions, and the dismal hulks of overcrowded tenements preserve at least outwardly the style of a bygone era, an ornate rococo crossed with excremental Habsburg.

Krleza's office looks out on a pleasant, quiet square fittingly named after the nineteenth-century bishop and educator Strossmajer, surrounded by buildings in Vienna Imperial and by the solidly bourgeois facades of what had once been upper-middle-class apartment houses. From behind one of these false fronts, in a cavernous structure with mildewed walls and marble stairs worn round by at least four generations, Krleza now runs an ambitious project, the publication of Yugoslavia's first multi-volume encyclopedia. No sinecure, but a full-time job into which he has thrown himself with his customary zest (though without neglecting his fiction: he is still working on a nine hundred page trilogy of which the first part has already appeared in print).

There are dangers in revisiting the idols of one's youth, and writers should in any case be read rather than cornered in the flesh; but Krleza is the exception. He is not disappointing. Massive, blunt, yet at the same time incongruously kind, a cherubic Jupiter with an enormous head fringed by recalcitrant tufts of white hair, he has the vigor and enthusiasm of a man half his age. His large, cluttered office is an intellectual's workshop devoid of fancy touches; no management consultant or interior sterilizer has had a hand in it, and even the impressive hand-carved desk is clearly functional, all but buried under a mess of books, papers, cups and saucers, a coffee maker. Everything about the man conveys a lack of pretense, a spontaneous warmth which rarely appears in his work; but it is his charm that comes as a shock. Charm seems im-

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probable in a battle-scarred old wolf. He is not, one suspects, above using it — who is? — even on his own behalf; that he has long been using it to help others, discreetly and behind the scenes, is an open secret.

The outcast is now swamped with honors, praise and recognition — deputy to the National Assembly, intimate of Tito, head of the National Institute of Lexicography, and at long last an author not only famous but also published in his own country, where a thirty-six volume collected edition is now appearing.

We had probably always misread him, misconstrued as revolutionary what in fact proved to be undeviating consistency. Krleza was subversive only in that he stubbornly kept faith with a vision of humanity clearly at odds with that of Austrian bureaucrats, Yugoslav autocrats and Stalinist commissars. The man who thirty years ago had been regarded as a dangerous fanatic turned out to be the one sane man in a madhouse who had the courage of his sanity.

Symbolic, therefore, and perhaps symptomatic as well is the recent success of one of his books, originally written in 1938, whose focal idea is a paradigm of this very situation — the tragicomedy of a successful lawyer whom, *nel mezzo del cammin,* fate and circumstances suddenly compel to be ruthlessly honest with himself and all those about him, to assume full responsibility for all his thoughts and actions and to speak the truth regardless of consequences. Rohwolt's West German paperback edition of *Mind's Edge,* published this spring, has already gone through five printings; and while the wit and the venom of the prose undoubtedly contributed to the belated success of this relatively short work, Krleza himself ascribes it to the relevance of its basic problem to the moral climate of contemporary Germany.

Yugoslavia has unquestionably become a much healthier place, and Krleza's brand of sanity no longer constitutes clear and present danger. But there is still a broad gap between his enlightened sanity and the pursuit of truth regardless of consequences, as preached by Djilas.

"To hell with sanity," says Stavra.

Stavra is the son of a lifelong activist and authentic Partisan hero. Born after the war, he left home a year ago and now sees his parents only at irregular intervals for what he characterizes as an affectionate exchange of irrelevant news. "No break — we just have nothing to say to each other."

The others, his fellow students, agree. Inordinately bright and well-informed, they seem older than I remember their parents to have been at that age.

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"When they were our age, said Stavra, "they fought the fascists and worked underground and got beaten to death in Gestapo dungeons. For our sake, I know; and we're grateful. We truly are, but what else are we supposed to do about it—apologize for being born too late? They think we have it soft, and we think we've about had our fill of how tough they had it when they were our age. So we try to change the subject, and sometimes we find that there isn't any other.

"Where it [the dialogue] breaks down, is on the subject of politics."

" 'Politics is pornography,' " said one of the girls, quoting Miodrag Bulatovic, a writer of her own generation. "War is the supreme obscenity, and politics its bastard child. Or maybe it's the other way around."

"The revolutionaries have settled down to sanity and a good dinner," said Stavra. "I don't blame them. That, by the way, is what they most hold against us—that we even refuse to blame them. That we just simply don't give a damn."

"Our generation . . . ," began the girl, but Stavra cut her short.

"Our generation nothing. No one talks for anybody but himself. That's the difference between us and them. Anyway, my answer is no."

"Answer to what?"

"To whatever comes up. Something is bound to."

Ernst Pawel

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

McLUHAN PREDICTS DEPRESSION BY 1972

Dr. Marshall McLuhan, the communications theorist, predicted yesterday that the United States will have an economic depression in about five years because its youth lacks direction.

Speaking at the second annual seminar of TV Stations, Inc., at the New York Hilton Hotel, Dr. McLuhan told programming and management executives that the "turned-on generation, the swingers" are in a "slump of human drive and ambition." "This is all that is necessary to cause a depression," he said. . . .

Earlier at the meeting Walter D. Scott, Chairman of the National Broadcasting Company, predicted that annual advertising expenditures on television would rise to $6.5-billion over the next 10 years. Advertising expenditures are now about $2-billion a year.
(*New York Times,* September 29, 1967).

WISCONSIN AIDE APOLOGIZES FOR CALLING OFFICIALS STUPID

MADISON, WIS. (UPI) — Grant Miller, Assistant State Insurance Commissioner, apologized to the State Senate for calling its members "stupid political hacks."

"It is distressing to me," he said in a letter, "that some choose to regard my remarks as a personal attack on them when such was not my intent. . . ."
(*New York Times,* August 26, 1967). Contributed by Lucy Mindel, Waban, Massachusetts.

JUDGE IN FBI CASE SUGGESTS A GI RIGHTS TO NECK

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 — A Federal judge suggested today that a young man who became accustomed to necking and petting while in the military might have a legal right to continue for a while after he returned to civilian life. . . . Furthermore, the judge said, the veteran's right to neck might even apply if he became an employee of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. . . . The Court is considering whether J. Edgar Hoover . . . acted legally in dismissing a bachelor clerk who had kept a girl overnight in his apartment. . . . The clerk, Thomas H. Carter, 26

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years old, has sworn in court papers that nothing but "necking and spooning" went on. . . . Judge Leventhal reminded the Government's counsel that under the Uniform Military Training Act a returning serviceman must be given a chance to adjust to the changed conditions of his civilian job. . . . The F.B.I. might have to give returning servicemen a chance to adjust to the F.B.I.'s lofty standard of girl-boy relations. . . . "Many people in the military service think that premarital petting in private is not offensive," said Judge Leventhal, a former Coast Guard lieutenant commander. "Maybe even officers would do it. . . ."
(*New York Times*, September 21, 1967).

TV EDITORS FACE PROBLEMS OF WAR

N.B.C. and A.B.C. provide free copies of film to soldiers' families that request them. C.B.S., which says it receives up to 10 such requests a day, charges $5 to $25 depending on the length of film, but free copies go to families of soldiers who are killed, either in the battle shown, or subsequently.
(*New York Times,* May 29, 1967). Contributed by Dan Isaac, New York, New York.

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EXPERIMENTAL THEATER — Drama

SPECIAL / COLOR — "Road Signs on a Merry-Go-Round." Dramatic and documentary techniques combine to show how the thoughts of three philosopher-theologians relate to a search for meaning in today's world. An allegorical husband and wife roam the New York City area, where they view life from the perspectives of Martin Buber, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. . . . Filmed on location. . . .

"Lamp unto My Feet" and "Look Up and Live" will not be seen.
(*TV Guide,* October 7, 1967). Contributed by Seymour Britchky, New York, New York.

BOY FIGHTS HAIRCUT ORDER

SAN JOSE — . . . District Superintendent Earl Goodell [said] that long hair had created disciplinary problems in classrooms. "We are not trying to make everyone look and act alike," he said, "but there is a point at which individual thinking can create problems."
(*The Examiner*). Contributed by Morton Felix, Berkeley, California.

EDITORS' NOTE: *We'd like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to* PR *will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be sent to the late comers.*

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BOOKS

TWO POETS

COLLECTED POEMS OF A. D. HOPE. The Viking Press, Inc. $6.00.

NEAR THE OCEAN. By Robert Lowell. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc. $5.50

At first glance there is no special interest attached to the fact that A. D. Hope is an Australian poet; his subjects and attitudes seem firmly European. His poise and sophistication remind one often of Auden, with whom he is in fact contemporary. (Hope's collection covers the period 1930-1965.) Still there are deliberate distancing notes sounded — as in a poem called "Australia" — which give this book its special cast: "They call her a young country, but they lie: / She is the last of lands, the emptiest / . . . Yet there are some like me turn gladly home /From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find / The Arabian desert of the human mind." Those "turns gladly home" do not, in fact, dominate this collection, but they provide a retreat, "the Arabian desert of the human mind," from which European literary modes can be reviewed with a freshness one would have thought almost impossible in a post–*Waste-Land world.* We are led through a very familiar gallery of mythological, historical and Biblical subjects, and we are asked to see the flash of energy behind the traditional pose. It is no surprise to find Hope drawn by Rome, the greatest gallery of them all, in a jocular Byronic poem on the uses and abuses of history. Nor is it a surprise, in his "Letter from Rome," to find him mocking an American girl who, during her finishing school year in Italy, keeps crisp notebooks on the history of art and her obligatory Italian love affair. But, that tale gaily and sharply told, his narrator shifts gears: the true pilgrim, not stopping with the mere city of Rome, goes on, instead, to the Lake of Nemi, where he will recover his sense of the mysterious, forceful prehistoric gods. At times too simple, too close to versified Frazer, the closing section of the poem remains a clue to Hope's more intense, more successful mythological poems, which are meant to "re-create the fables and revive / In men the energies by which they live."

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Hope's best poems are about confusions of sexual power and the way in which it both awakens and destroys the feelings. Here, for example, in "The Return of Persephone," the goddess becomes "the girl once more in all her actions," as she is summoned by Hermes to leave the underground world of Dis:

> *And still she did not speak, but turned again*
> *Looking for answer, for anger, for command:*
> *The eyes of Dis were shut upon their pain;*
> *Calm as his marble brow, the marble hand*
> *Slept on his knee. Insuperable disdain*
>
> *Foreknowing all bounds of passion, of power, of art,*
> *Mastered but could not mask his deep despair.*
> *Even as she turned with Hermes to depart,*
> *Looking her last on her grim ravisher*
> *For the first time she loved him from her heart.*

His skill is partly one of reinterpretation. The literary scene is one we know, but the characters have been assigned new positions on stage, Persephone hesitant, caught between the "cool, bright glance" of Hermes and the riveting powers of her familiar majesty. In another of the mythological poems, Circe, her sensual enchantments gained, finds herself alone, rich in words and feelings for the first time, but mocked by the melancholy speechless world she has created around herself. It is interesting that Hope can deal with sexuality most subtly when narrating fables, as in these poems, and in "Totentanz: The Coquette," "The Coasts of Cerigo," "Fafnir" and a haunting though not entirely successful "Epistle from Holofernes." In more modern settings ("The Brides," "Conquistador," "Morning Coffee," "The Young Girl at the Ball") the emotions appear blunted, single, a bit crude. The retold myths allow the play of sexuality as *felix culpa*, a fortunate fall; in the modern instances he sees only decline — his marriageable modern ladies are machine-tooled threats to life.

To put it another way, modern settings draw forward Hope the satirist, jaunty but rather uniformly critical of mechanized, overcivilized lives. But he rises to the challenge of a fable. His real gift is for narrative — not so much telling a story, as retelling it with an air of wisdom and experience. The story is a *tableau vivant*, action halted at a moment of high feeling, nuances revealed by the measured order in which we are directed to gestures and landscapes. It is an index of the success of recent American poetry, introspective, often jagged, that declarative sentences,

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direct syntax, firmly rhymed stanzas should sound now a little strange. These last are precisely Hope's resources, his assured way of drawing us from detail to detail, finishing a picture which stands powerful and separate. Here is the close of the tale of the mysterious sea creature, the Labra; Hope's command of stanzaic form quite clearly measures our reactions, shapes then alters our feelings:

The divers on these coasts have cruel hands;
Their lives are hard; they do not make old bones;
The brutal masters send them down too deep.
But sometimes, as he combs the clefts and sands,
Among the oyster-beds and bearded stones
One comes upon the Labra fast asleep

And throws away his knife, his bag of pearl,
To take her in his arms and wrench her free.
Their bodies cling together as they rise
Spinning and drifting in the ocean swirl.
The seamen haul them in and stand to see
The exquisite, fabled creature as she dies.

But while in air they watch her choke and drown,
Enchanted by her beauty, they forget
The body of their comrade at her side,
From whose crushed lungs the bright blood oozing down
Jewel by ruby jewel from the wet
Deck drops and merges in the turquoise tide.
("The Coasts of Cerigo")

Many of Hope's poems are triumphantly responsive to literature. They revive the sense of excitement in being a cultivated reader: "Man Friday" projects Crusoe's servant into the loneliness of the civilized world. "An Epistle: Edward Sackville to Venetia Digby" pursues the writer through an elegant Ovidian labyrinth of feeling. There are some tart Cavalier lyrics; some poems on poets (weak on Yeats, splendid on Coleridge); and a moving Renaissance translation, "The Twenty-Second Sonnet of Louise Labé." At moments the literary reference may be merely parasitic and bumptious. Echoes of quotations ("Chaos comes again"; "Where e'er you walk . . .") are scattered like landmines, mostly for the fun of it. If they have no dramatic force, they remind us, on the other hand, of the delight the poet is taking in joining a literate company. It is rare to find — as one does with Hope — poems that depend so successfully on a shared sense of community. His audience is fixed in position, ready to follow the action within the proscenium his poems assume.

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Yet myth has other uses: it confirms
The heart's conjectures and approves its terms
Against the servile speech of compromise,
Habit which blinds, custom which overlies
And masks us from ourselves. . . .

What I mean by a shared sense of community is best seen by reading some of Hope's poems against Robert Lowell's newest volume, *Near the Ocean.* In the opening — and best — of a suite of five poems that gives the book its title, Lowell is out to show just how much one cannot assume about the links between poet and society. "Waking Early Sunday Morning" is by impulse meditative and yet moves toward public statement. It is ribbed with overheard stage directions to the self (*Stop, back off . . . Look up . . . Sing softer*) but ends with public address and a guarded ironic prayer:

Pity the planet, all joy gone
from this sweet volcanic cone;
peace to our children when they fall
in small war on the heels of small
war — until the end of time
to police the earth, a ghost
orbiting forever lost
in our monotonous sublime.

This closing statement stands as uneasy resolution to jagged drifts of thought. The adjustments of voice from stanza to stanza — invocations, questions, commands — are the essence of the poem, just as one blinks waking up to successive views of one's surroundings. Dissatisfactions enter the poem gradually, with wakening: private malaise, irritations with public hollowness merge and are distinguished from one another. But first there is one of those tantalizing glimpses of adventure and escape, an energetic and desperate wish that haunts the entire poem:

O to break loose, like the chinook
salmon jumping and falling back,
nosing up to the impossible
stone and bone crushing waterfall —
raw-jawed, weak-fleshed there, stopped by ten
steps of the roaring ladder, and then
to clear the top on the last try,
alive enough to spawn and die.

That free impulse grows paler with day. "The unpolluted joy / and criminal leisure of a boy" drifts to fears ("Fierce, fireless mind, running

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downhill"; "O that the spirit could remain / tinged but untarnished by its strain!"). Morning puzzles — what one sees through a glass of water — suggest metaphysical ones ("Each day, He shines through darker glass. / In this small town where everything / is known, I see his vanishing emblems . . ."). Behind the mocking tone of these last lines — omniscience reduced to the gossip of a New England town — he gathers the growing frustrations of the poem. Business as usual, the faithful at church, empty patriotism ("His white spire and flagpole") — these Sunday sights represent useless mysteries, mused over and rejected. He is provoked into a bitter gaiety, light counter to the dark moods of the poem:

> *elated as the President*
> *girdled by his establishment*
> *this Sunday morning, free to chaff*
> *his own thoughts with his bear-cuffed staff,*
> *swimming nude, unbuttoned, sick*
> *of his ghost-written rhetoric!*

I dwell on the angular give-and-take of the poem because finally that is its subject: rousing the self to face the day and everything that entails. If this poem has something to say about privacy and public horrors, it is in showing the inner resources by which we deal with them: frail thoughtfulness; bitter, fanciful mockery; and finally the pity mustered at the end for "all joy gone / from this sweet volcanic cone." At least two of the other poems in this series are placed at the same crossroads of public and private: *Fourth of July in Maine* and *Central Park*. The latter, revised since its periodical publication, has lost a cache of personal detail which counterpointed and framed the powerful, violent scenes in the park; and, though this may not be a fair way to judge it, I miss the perspective of the earlier version. More than that, both of these poems lack the remarkable movement of "Waking Early Sunday Morning," its shifts of mood and energetic questioning.

Translations and imitations make up more than half of this book. From Horace, Juvenal, Dante, Góngora and Quevedo, the poems are, in Lowell's own words, largely about "Rome, the greatness and horror of her empire." Many of them, especially Juvenal's poem that has come to be called "The Vanity of Human Wishes," are important complements to the American poems in this volume, almost as if Lowell were trying other voices, other adjustments of the intimate and oratorical. It is curious to have the Juvenal satire given to us — new — in English, after it has been familiar so long in Dr. Johnson's grand philosophical

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version. Now, again, it has been given a raciness and particularity (quite foreign to Johnson's aim or taste) very close to Juvenal's own voice. Lowell's translation makes us uneasily aware of how many of our own abuses and Byzantine vanities recall those of Imperial Rome. With the exception of some supercharged verbs, Lowell remains faithful to both the letter and spirit of Juvenal. He has even found a way of admitting important enjambments, alliterations and internal rhymes from the original: "for tombs too have their downfall and their doom." But most striking of all, he has taken on Juvenal's tone of easy authority, preaching, bantering, always close to the crowd: mocking them ("Throw Hannibal on the scales, how many pounds / does the great captain come to?"); taking up their voices, suggesting hypotheses about life and crushing each hope as it is raised ("Let's say you keep your mind . . . ," "Let's say your son survives . . . ," "But beauty never hurts the good! Go ask / Bellerophon, go ask Hippolytus./ Chastity couldn't save their lives . . ."). The cases are unrelenting and horrifying. Of old age, for example:

> *Now only fevers warm the thinning blood,*
> *diseases of all kinds lock hands and dance,*
> *even their names escape you. . . .*

The poem ends on a sober Roman note, with its dash of heroic scorn and heroic example:

> *Still, if you ask for something, if you must*
> *buy holy sausages and dedicate*
> *the tripe of bulls at every altar, pray for*
> *a healthy body and a healthy soul,*
> *a soul that is not terrified by death,*
> *that thinks long life the least of nature's gifts,*
> *courage that takes whatever comes — this hero*
> *like Hercules, all pain and labor, loathes*
> *the lecherous gut of Sardanapalus.*
> *Success is worshipped as a god; it's we*
> *who set up shrines and temples in her name.*
> *I give you simply what you have already.*

There is, in these final lines, a remnant of community that can be appealed to, even if the appeal is very bleak. "I give you simply what you have already" is very different from the closing prayer of "Waking Early Sunday Morning": "Pity the planet. . . ." One wonders how much of Juvenal's easy command is desired by the more troubled poet of "Waking Early." How important the Roman poems will be as part of

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Lowell's collected verse is a difficult point. Here they stand as an effort to try on voices of critical authority and power, just as many of his earlier *Imitations* assumed the anguished voice of Baudelaire.

Lowell's verse is not very well served by the format of *Near the Ocean*. Mixing poetry and drawings is always a tricky matter. In the Juvenal translation Sidney Nolan's drawings are spaced so as to stall and start the text in a totally arbitrary fashion and their style jars with the savagery of the poem. Often the literalness of the drawings sent me back to the verse glad that there are certain tasks only ordered words can perform. (Human features superimposed on an anchor scarcely complement the final lines of Lowell's tribute to Theodore Roethke: "she made you nonexistent / the ocean's anchor, our high tide.") Most irritating, the slick coffee-table design of the volume entirely misrepresents the poems which, at their best, challenge things that are shiny and bright. It is precisely not a volume of "collected poems" as A. D. Hope's is. Its level is uneven, not as consistently high as Lowell's last book, *For the Union Dead*. But, like the splendid title poem of that previous volume, its asks difficult questions about individual feelings and public brutality. The poems are tentative and urgent, canny about public motives and one's ways of deceiving oneself. It is hardly surprising that he should have been attracted — in envy as well as fellow feeling — to the Roman satirists, whose critical tempers still permitted glimpses of heroic resolve.

David Kalstone

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SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

A PRIMER OF IGNORANCE. By R. P. Blackmur. Edited by Joseph Frank. Harcourt, Brace and World. $5.95.

VALIDITY IN INTERPRETATION. By E. D. Hirsch. Yale University Press. $6.50.

THE METAMORPHOSES OF THE CIRCLE. By Georges Poulet. Translated by Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman. Johns Hopkins Press. $10.00.

E. D. Hirsch divides criticism into two moments, of which the first is intuitive and deeply sympathetic, the second reflexive and logical. Presumably, criticism as art and criticism as science. He focuses his own book exclusively on the second moment, although he seems unwilling to note how the first moment always influences the second. Nevertheless, his demand for a logical method for weighing evidence about verbal statements, and a means to secure validity, is a fair one. What it involves is that the critic turn himself on the work he criticizes, asking himself questions that will either legitimize his statements about the work, or, hopefully, correct them; in either case, he makes himself aware of what he is doing. Works of literature, Hirsch argues, have a meaning that is neither arbitrary nor changeable, and it is to his great credit that he recognizes the vast difficulties of construing the meaning not only of a work but of meaning itself. Consequently his book argues painstakingly (and rather drily) for a very modest "hermeneutic," in which intention (in Husserl's sense of the word) or meaning, as opposed to significance, is common to every use of language. Even nonsense has meaning, albeit nonsensical meaning. In literature, the broadest category of intention is genre: each literary utterance belongs to a "type" that performs a definable task, so that we can understand *Paradise Lost* because it is an epic which will always fulfill specific social and historical expectations. Hirsch proposes little that is more definite than this, for he is prudently hamstrung by a couple of limitations: 1), "there are no general rules which are at once general and practical," and 2), there are "no rules for generating insights." The rest of the time he spends in useful groundwork: making distinctions between meaning and significance, attacking relativism, generalizing about verbal meaning and probability.

Hirsch's most interesting observation is that in criticism "to understand is to understand as necessary." I doubt that his modesty will let

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him associate this remark made about the end of a critic's logical job of work with Heidegger writing about Hölderlin. For his essays on the poet are, Heidegger says, his method of showing how Hölderlin is a "necessity of thought," a series of actions that are necessary for the mind to perform. Hirsch might characteristically demand validation for such a project, yet when we read Poulet or Blackmur validation is simply in the necessary beauty of their understanding of literature, which to them is the crux of thought. Criticism is notorious for its imperialism, carried out in the name of understanding: method swallowing work, argument dividing to conquer and variety colonized into periods and "ages." By contrast, Poulet's wish is to *prolong* literature in his criticism, Blackmur's to reveal literature taking, in Henry James's phrase, from "the enormous lap of the actual." Criticism is therefore a way of living up to and living with literature. Inner conversion rather than public quarrel. We may say that such criticism flies too close to art, yet both are the more interesting for it, I think, and doubtless criticism is less concerned with accuracy as a result. Fiction makes its own canon of accuracy, however, to which Hirsch is too impervious, for even in criticism there are two cultures.

One can solicit Heidegger only at the beginning of any appreciation of the work of Blackmur and Poulet; their work is too richly distinctive, each in its own way, each now almost an institution (without enough acclaim though), to herd under a general rubric. That their criticism requires the attention we give art is of course very debatable. Certainly except for a handful of fine essays, notably by J. Hillis Miller on Poulet and by Joseph Frank and John Crowe Ransom on Blackmur, most critics have not been convinced that such criticism requires much attention. Furthermore, the idioms Blackmur and Poulet employ are notoriously problematic. Neither man is given to strident polemic, nor to "pieces" written with the left hand. Poulet's criticism, and, even though it is misleadingly dumped in with New Criticism understood as explication, Blackmur's seem intensely to play to the reader's imaginative awareness. For theirs is an enterprise whose aim is nothing less than the reconstruction of experience apprehended from the point of its origin to its incarnation in form, or literature. So delicate an undertaking, which Blackmur has called bringing literature to performance, supposes an ultimate talent for closeness to the animating experience that goes into literature. Hillis Miller has spoken of Poulet's "quietistic" explorations into a writer's consciousness, and Joseph Frank of Blackmur's sentences as "ideated sensations": both styles reflect the care taken in preserving a sense of literature as highly nuanced and as intimate as possible. (In-

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terestingly, Blackmur's unique classroom mode, as described by Arthur Gold, one of Blackmur's Princeton students, was to demonstrate how one becomes intimate with literature.) For all their differences then, Poulet and Blackmur are virtuous in their devotion to a writer's experience, and virtuosos in their gift for handling and representing that experience.

The costs of such criticism are necessarily high. Blackmur irritates with his hedging, his hidden ball play, as one critic called it, that neither wholly delivers a point nor lets it go. His wit is gnarled and capricious, his continuity often a mystery. Poulet's tone suggests the voice of literature itself, as if each writer he discusses is simply an idea momentarily illuminated by a cosmic consciousness. Unkindly, a twentieth-century Circumlocution Office (Blackmur) and Monsieur Teste (Poulet). Yet a price more than worth it. Blackmur's aphorisms that epitomize a writer's energy, the special genius that combines "unconscious skills of apprehension and gradual intimacy" with a deep immersion in the ways of "bourgeois humanism," the talent for theorizing that never loses its grip on the "rich irregularity of things"; Poulet's enormous tact in the choice of quotations, his ability to describe a consciousness revealing itself to itself as "pure instantaneousness," the extraordinary working together in his essays of a heedless abstraction with an almost shocking particularity. Neither plays what Blackmur calls "the game of research." And each reads literature like his autobiography written at the time of happening.

It never will cease to amaze, I think, how it is that the closeness and intimacy that Poulet and Blackmur convey can be so greatly different in tone. Poulet's books, of which *The Metamorphoses of the Circle* is only the third to be translated, are always concerned with a theme — time, space, the circle — treated in the work of a series of writers. The given writer's initial moment of self-consciousness, his Cartesian *cogito*, will imply the kind of interior life that he will continue to lead thereafter: man is given only the instant, says Poulet in *Le Point de Depart* (1964), and then the mind creates duration whose "true direction is that which goes from the isolated instant to temporal continuity." Poulet's method is to attribute measurable dimension to a writer's style, which is the writer's consciousness translated into the duration of language. Hence Poulet can study changes in interior space and time, changes in the cosmology of style and consciousness, as evidence of the history of sensibility. In *The Metamorphoses of the Circle* Poulet chooses the circle as a Kantian *ding-an-sich*, its perfection and inviolability providing an aloof model for minds whose chief purpose, Poulet claims, is to achieve plenitude, horizon and centrality. (A recent *TLS* review of

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Poulet's work put him down sarcastically for these "fancy" unrealities, but I do not find it hard to imagine that the mind can be interested, even obsessively, in space and time.) Thus in eighteen chapters, four of which examine whole periods and fourteen that explore individual writers, he enters into contact with specific consciousness, a contact that is direct and which is mediated only by the mind's effort to see its own center and circumference. For the circle — as Poulet shows in each chapter — is an image for understanding the mind's dialectical sense of its own existence: the center is mind's identity, the circumference its sequential progress through time, the area its way of inhabiting space and the whole figure its final coherence.

Between the Middle Ages and the Baroque period consciousness passes from an image of itself as the spherical analogy of God's perfect circular wholeness to an indulgent delight in the mind's free concentration and expansion from circle to circumference and back again. The eighteenth century, "a relativist century," feels thought as "pure sinuosity," creating its own occasional centers like a series of spider webs. Chapters on Rousseau, Lamartine and the Romantics reveal the mind's gradual defensive withdrawal into a center whose strength is its alienation from others, because in reaching beyond itself it discovers the hostility of others — Rousseau — or insubstantiality — Lamartine. Brilliant chapters on Balzac, Flaubert, Mallarmé and James alternate with unsatisfyingly vague essays on Nerval and Vigny. The triumph happens also to be the book's longest essay, on Amiel, the Swiss diarist. Here we discover the validation of Poulet's method, for nowhere more than in a writer whose concern is "pure consciousness" can we see how clearly thought's processes aspire to the mathematical exactness of zero, point, circumference and area. Despite the awesome length of his diary (fifty thousand plus pages) Amiel becomes quite literally the "brief abstract" of mind, an attenuated chronicle of interior history, a man-made circle that compels, *implicates*, all other minds into its curves. Amiel, I think, is Poulet's archetype; every other chapter translates Amiel's ascetic exercises — Poulet reminds us that Amiel was singularly inept at "the dreary intercourse" of everyday life — into a fuller, though less perfect, idiom of self-consciousness.

Poulet asks us to believe that consciousness can be grasped as a pure texture, as an irreducible medium. He deals only with a writer's total *oeuvre*, rarely with individual works. History is read as consciousness slowly filling itself out, like some vast geometric pattern realizing itself in reality. It ought to be remarked also how much Poulet's general scheme of literary history adheres to our conventional understanding of

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it, but even though he speaks of the medieval sense of wholeness and of romantic alienation he gives us an uncannily precise tracing of the figures in history's carpet. God, presumably, is totality, the fulfillment of which goes on apace. Behind, or underneath, all activity is the desire for completion, and if Poulet's quiet essays seem unconcerned with the brute facts of existence it is because his criticism is an essentializing activity. One may wish to disagree with him, but in the absence of everything but the virtuality of consciousness the conflicts of ordinary experience, as we encounter them in Edmund Wilson, say, or in Erich Auerbach, seem completely foreign. For all its tremendous complexity Poulet's work is like an Olympian daydream (Coleridge's phrase for *Clarissa*), its voice unvaryingly deliberate as it turns out one author after another like emptied receptacles. His text is Maurice Blanchot's description of literature: "the experience whereby consciousness discovers its being in its inability to lose consciousness." With Poulet, in fine, we see what Shelley meant when he referred to the "intense inane"; it is one of the mind's necessary poles, though its untempered fineness drives us in the other direction.

Blackmur is our best guide on that vacillating journey between Poulet's metaphysics and "what holds us, what keeps us, what moves us." All of Blackmur's work can be viewed as an effort to grasp the rich variety of experience as it bends and surges either toward form (thought) or toward pure behavior (actuality). To discover the "deep, underlying form" in behavior is the task of literature, specifically of fiction, and most specifically in the master nineteenth-century novelists, of whom James was Blackmur's spiritual mentor. Whereas Poulet sees consciousness aspiring to the condition of mathematics, Blackmur prefers to do his "sums" in criticism: his "digits," as he called them, are analysis, comparison, elucidation and judgment. He is a lively abacus of all our critical and imaginative skills. What quickens the pulse of Blackmur's work is a skepticism learnt from Montaigne, what Blackmur called "having a marginal mind for the play and interest of it," which holds to a sense of radical imperfection in both imagination and intellect. This is one reason, incidentally, why Blackmur's essays are fiendishly hard to write about. So shot through is his work with provisionality that statement about his work is virtually misrepresentation. The value of Blackmur is in the reading of his Tory anarchy.

The irony is that Blackmur is almost always talking about, and attempting, representation. *A Primer of Ignorance*, a selection of essays culled by Frank out of Blackmur's writing between 1943 and 1959, is the representation of Blackmur's intimacy, "the sense of which is the

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only primer of [our, his] ignorance." Intimacy, first of all, with *Anni Mirabiles*, the literature of 1921-1925: with the sensuality of its poetry, with the absence in it of "predictive form," and the lack in it of a recognizable principle of composition. The writers he deals with are fully appropriated by his sensibility, and certainly his knack for inventing quirky, yet superb, titles for his essays and unparalleled epitomes for his authors is a sign of how assimilated modern literature had become to his idiom. In subsequent essays he plays with problems of the intellect and imagination in modern society (the logos in the catacomb) and with the prevailing symptoms of the American pathology. Henry Adams and Henry James are poignant witnesses to the "expense of greatness" in America.

The concluding paragraph of Blackmur's warm essay on Allan Tate shows Blackmur at his generous, and epitomizing, best. There the achievement of a man of letters "unwilling to surrender his intelligence or his sense of the human condition as its chief regular informing agent," is turned into a symphony of interweaving themes associated with Tate's work. What especially characterizes the passage (which is far too long to quote) is Blackmur's use of "terms," words that are the focus of Blackmur's criticism and the gestures of his mind: they fix the contours of his reason and imagination even as they describe the object (in this case Tate) of his critique. For, he wrote in "My Critical Perspective," published in Japan in 1959 and not found in the present volume,

> intellectual formulation is the great convenience for ordering the experience of the mind, and the cause of the imperfections of the mind and even greater convenience for stepping in the guise of generalization or hypothesis when there is not enough experience to go around; which is how you lead from the known to the unknown in any field, I suppose. Or again, if either art or criticism, if either imagination or intellect, were relatively perfect, we should have no trouble and no problem and the staring inadequacies of either in respect to the other would long since have disappeared.

The staring inadequacies of imagination in respect to intellect secure Blackmur's terms: they appear then to belong inevitably together. To theorizing intellect belong administration, convention, formulation and bourgeois humanism (defined as "the treasure of residual reason in live relation to the madness of the senses"); to representative imagination belong the faculties of "incarnating" the madness of the senses, "the lap of the actual," the "under-momentum" of life that gives gesture to language. Action is common to both reason and imagination, and in art each ought to borrow from the other. Technique is imagination aspiring to reason; form is reason aspiring to imagination. Knowledge is "a fall from the paradise of undifferentiated sensation." The two sets of terms

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dance together in *A Primer of Ignorance*, each set "radically imperfect" alone, and Blackmur choreographs them ambitiously to embrace literature, politics, society. He notes, for example, the tendency of Americans to use technique so well as to leave out the informing subject — this in connection with his impressions of American ballet. Yet this tendency seems designed to counter the force in twentieth-century letters that gives precedence to thought *arising out of the senses*, rather than to thought out of the reason. Thus one set of terms — those related to the representative imagination — rebel, and instead of seeking their control in reason, look to their own activity for control. Poetry in the twentieth century becomes an irregular metaphysics, and subsequently a secret craft, the novel a "technique of trouble" and sciences like psychology "mistake the conditions of our struggle for its object." Conversely, political agencies administer without governing, and society becomes a catacomb without spirit. History is a creative lie. The intellectual, like Adams, finds intellectual "harmony" in the twelfth-century world; the artist, James, is lost in "the country of the blue," for which there is no equivalent in reason. Artist and intellectual are makers of rival creations.

Alone, reason constricts; alone, imagination is chaos. On the one hand, prison, on the other, "painful unlearning" and "a special kind of illiteracy." So regular is Blackmur's sense of provisionality, however, that even in the supreme partnership of art the two generate more uncertainty. Even if in his essays one feels that intelligible terms tend finally to dissolve like sugar in hot tea, Blackmur himself survives the momentary sense of his terms. He quotes Ophelia's "To have seen what I have seen, see what I see" with special pertinence: art rises beyond intelligibility into a kind of stunned, yet clear, awareness. This is why two of Blackmur's favorite sayings are Croce's "art gives theoretic form to our feelings," and Maritain's "art bitten by poetry longs to be freed from the control of the reason." What else is this but art acting as reason (Croce) and art acting as imagination (Maritain)? And when in his essays he works the two maxims together, it is criticism behaving like art. Between them then Poulet and Blackmur show us life translated into literature. One, life's resolution into a book of world consciousness, fully immanent and always moving toward certain realization; the other, life's irresolution in essays that mock realization and represent the stutters of our imperfections. James said that the house of fiction has many windows, to which we add that criticism has many eyes with which to see; its unique poignancy is that criticism sees from *this* side of fiction, though in reading Blackmur and Poulet we cannot often be sure.

Edward W. Said

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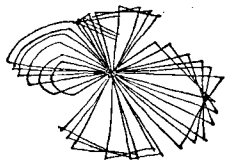
Nabokov

The Man and His Work

Studies edited by L. S. Dembo



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DOUBLE INDEMNITY

LETTERS OF WALLACE STEVENS. Ed. by Holly Stevens. Knopf. $17.50.

These letters, almost a thousand of them, cover sixty years of Stevens' life. They appear at a time when the examination of Stevens' poetry has already become a profitable cottage industry while the examination of his life has stopped at the hoary question of how he managed to be a businessman and a poet at the same time. The lucid and graceful comments about his own work which fill Stevens' later letters set a standard which critics will be hard put to equal; and if his comments about his life do not solve any mystery of divided loyalties, it is because Stevens himself found neither mystery nor division there. He saw his insurance work as taking time and giving order and money in return. That was all. Sometimes it was even a protection:

> How fortunate I am, in such weather, to have the office, where one lives in a sort of vacuum, containing nothing but the pastime of work. The great building is like a neutral zone, invulnerable to the weather. The leaves outdoors seen through the windows, belong to a perishable landscape, come from nowhere.

The intense curiosity we feel about the letters of a great poet would seem to imply a hope that they could hold the secret of his genius. I suspect, however, that the opposite is the case: the mind we want in letters is unpoetic, a collection of stylized confidences that only a Pamela, a Clarissa or a Viscomte de Valmont could actually impart. The secret, if it is one, can be found only in the poems themselves. There the movement of the poet's mind shows itself, though always heightened, visible only when its contours have already taken on the form of poetry. The most moving letters by poets, those of Hart Crane, Malcolm Lowry and Keats in Italy, are moving because of their very distance from any steady creation; in them we read the Shelleyan triumph of life over the artist.

Fascination with a poet's letters indicates, finally, a fear of his imagination. This impulse to humanize helps protect the reader from the "exceptional monster"; the poet in full regalia, the one man

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strong enough to check even the evasions of the "fat girl, terrestrial," his muse the earth. When letters reveal that a stunning poet was also a prig, a conniver or a Fascist, the shock is not entirely unpleasant: it brings Ariel back down to earth. The public poet is most vulnerable to this kind of spiritual scandal; the crackerbarrel Robert Frost created the audience that found him out. Stevens was not a public man, but he too can be embarrassed. He calls Negroes "coons," he has no sympathy for indigent poets (Kenneth Patchen, Dylan Thomas) and he ends a cavilling letter about his friend William Carlos Williams' possible "subversive" affiliations with a snobbish *non sequitur* about Williams' debt to the government because of his descent from recent immigrants.

But this is beside the point. Stevens' letters are unique among those of modern poets because they consistently show the mind of the poems at work on everyday life. There are few confidences and no letters that look as if they were taking the place of a poem that should have been written. They have the power of perception, if not the power of feeling, that Keats's letters have. They show a man we would not have known without them, a consciousness profoundly committed to the examination of its own effect on the real.

Stevens' early journals (unfortunately only haphazardly included in this collection) already relished the appearances of the real. In themselves they are a brilliant example of an American consciousness at the turn of the century. On the same day in 1899 that he found *Endymion* "intoxicating," Stevens observed a raindrop falling from a clemantis vine and decided that exactly such "quick, unexpected, commonplace things" should be noted down by poets. He found it "a monstrous pleasure to be specific about such a thing." His characteristic consciousness is already present in this account of a walk in 1904:

> The cedars glittered in the dismal woods. At the terminus of my walk, to call it so, I went to the edge of the Palisades, that having been my route, & lay on my belly on the top of one of the cliffs. This is something of an adventure for a man subject to being dizzy. Even a gull, some distance below me seemed to be conscious that it was flying high. But it was infinitely agreeable to listen to the shore so far below & to mark a catamaran of bricks sailing by & to see a wily shadfisher feeding excelsior to his goats. More, I watched the sun as it came from behind patches of cloud light up certain hills, while the others lay in shadow . . . From a hill that overlooks a proper valley other hills look like very decent waves or like clouds or like great ships. No doubt, if it had

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> been a bit nearer sunset, the particular hills I gazed at so long would have been very much like the steps to the Throne. And Blake's angels would have been there with their "Holy, Holy, Holy."

The Wordsworthian opportunity is seen but not taken. From his Snowdon of the Palisades Stevens looks down on the particular shad-fisher and "certain hills," all economically described. The view has the more than natural radiance of a Wordsworthian scene, but Stevens does not impute its look to a benevolent power in Nature. The vague forms in the valley take whatever shape the imagination gives them, but this triumph of the mind is part of the situation; Stevens does not stop to comment on it. The metaphors of sublimity with which the passage ends are conscious additions. The motive for metaphor here is extension, not definition. The sublime is one potential of this actual scene.

An early, necessary and constant angel of reality for Stevens was his wife, Elsie. (Her profile, sculpted by Adolph Alexander Weinman, was the liberty head on the old dime and fifty-cent piece.) Stevens wrote to her of "the touch of you organizing me again":

> It is as if I were in the proverbial far country and never knew how much I had become estranged from the actual reality of the things that are the real things of my heart, until the actual reality found a voice—you are the voice— . . . —What am I then? Something that but for you would be terribly unreal. A dreamy citizen of a native place—of which I am no citizen at all.

As the reality Stevens discussed in his letters became increasingly that of poetry, the movement of his mind became proportionately easier to observe, forming images, testing them as suitable fictions and bringing them back down again into prose for a précis. From the mid-thirties onward, Stevens' running commentary on his poetry had a declarative intensity matched in recent times only by Malcolm Lowry's famous defense of *Under the Volcano* and Frost's letters about "the sound of sense." Often the phrases of description rival those in the poems; out of context, many resemble Stevens' "Adagia": "The order of the spirit is the only music of the spheres: or, rather, the only music." "What the spirit wants it creates." "A strong mind distorts the world." "With a true poet his poetry is the same thing as his vital self. It is not possible for anyone else to touch it." He compares an inadequate fiction in "The Man with the Blue Guitar" to "Harry

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Truman as God. This second-rate creature is the adversity. I address him but with hostility, hoo-ing the slick trombones."

Stevens' letters to Harry Church about the possibility of establishing a chair of poetry at Princeton show how deep his conviction was that the theory of poetry was indistinguishable from its practice. The chair was to be a tribute to the imaginative powers of the poet:

> For this purpose, poetry means not the language of poetry but the thing itself, wherever it may be found. It does not mean verse any more than philosophy means prose. The subject-matter of poetry is the thing to be ascertained. Offhand the subject-matter is what comes to mind when one says of the month of August . . .
>
> "Thou art not August, unless I make thee so."
>
> It is the aspects of men and women that have been added to them by poetry.

The "one" who speaks of August to Church is clearly Stevens himself; but in "Asides on the Oboe," the poem he is quoting, the speaker is the poet-hero, the "impossible possible philosopher's man, / The man who has had the time to think enough." Just as Stevens in his youth was his own ephebe, the garret-poet looking out over the city roofs, so in middle age he could speak in the accents of his own fictional "central man, the human globe." He created the figure who could think of the seasons as his own creation, and he used that figure to pursue his greatest subject, the moving contour of earth as its changes are recreated and controlled by the mind of the poet.

Helen McNeil

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PLUS CA CHANGE

THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM. By Robert L. Heilbroner. Harper & Row. $4.95.

Robert Heilbroner writes a highly stylized book. He is like an abstract painter who executes a Real One for private consumption; and then hires himself out, so to speak, to translate it into a predigested version for a substantially less capable audience, offering just what — imagining the central drift of the *New York Times* for the coming period — is exactly necessary, no more and no less, for the deeper purposes of Good Citizenship. (He says he spent four years writing the thirty or forty thousand words comprising the present collection of two essays.) In this effort, equally interesting and misguided, no one can touch him.

I admire his talent as a rhetorician, although he is not of a size with J. K. Galbraith. But Heilbroner is the acknowledged Prince of Popularizers in that special field of awareness in which, it has been thought, the audience must be hog-tied in order even to be brought to sit still long enough to listen: *economics.* A fascinating fact that, in a country where the very souls of self, children and predecessors are regularly sold at bargain prices for inadequate reasons, the Subject Itself must be presented in pidgin or pious English.

There are undoubtedly thousands of educated people in this country — perhaps tens of thousands — who could and should read this book with profit. If I was certain that I was talking to any one of them, I would not have the slightest hesitation in recommending it in a loud voice. But in one area after another, who knows what who knows? One either accepts the coerced presumptions of some professionalism or other (especially coerced as to language), or one confronts the very dark fact that the common language has suffered vast deterioration, and we are nearly become strangers mumbling incoherently each about his own nonprofessional past. (In 1959, Adolf Berle published a brilliant study of our altered political economy in which he allotted twenty-six of one hundred and fifty-eight pages to four prefaces, one each for Businessmen, American Liberals, Scholars and the Uncommitted Public.)

I am suggesting that the audience has collapsed. This — and not the more widely remarked isolation of the artist or other communicator — is the central consequence of modern disruption. The modern "audience"

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is no longer even consistently prejudiced. The paradoxical result of this formulation, in place of the more conventionally romantic one, is that the writer and artist — if only he can, by leap of genius or benefit of accident or circumstance, find a live nerve among the animal debris of the audience — is immensely powerful: as powerful as that nerve. The deteriorated audience of disconnected nerves will buy anything: fashion is all. A second, not less important, result is that artificial simplicity with a fresh smell — what might be called beefed-up simplicity — is nearly irresistible: is now a primary form of modern herding.

What then, in this context, is the price of simplicity for the Prince of Popularizers in that one area of awareness (economics) where calculated miseducation takes its greatest toll? The price is personal depression running so deep that, self-deprived of poetry, it becomes rigidly willful and eventually fatuous. When a knowledgeable and talented writer strenuously and precisely limits himself to his own awful idea of the audience, the result is a success *only if a nerve is touched.* And that will be the result of luck or genius primarily — the hard, ugly work of simplifying is really secondary. Any willing talent can sneak into television; but only a Rod Serling can take and hold it by storm.

The nerve touched in *The Limits of Capitalism* is, unfortunately, the same one that was overmassaged in an earlier and rather more interesting book by Mr. Heilbroner, *The Future As History.* It is somehow very important to him to demonstrate that nothing very much is going to happen. I doubt that; but maybe. In any event, why the big effort to elevate this so-so sentiment to the level of Firm and Convincing Proof? Because if the future bites, the present may wiggle: it is, after all, the same animal. And a wiggling present does not simplify so readily.

The willed clarity which the author enforces on a very twitchy (in my opinion) present, requires large doses of old-fashioned nominalism dispensed in a heavily judicious manner. So the American system is called "capitalism" — which will not last forever, but is not apt to disappear overnight either. The supreme difficulty of getting anywhere while terming our system capitalist is overcome by equating "capitalism" and "business" and using the latter word to discuss whatever needs to be discussed, and the former to predict the future so as to ensure that the discussion amounts to as little as possible. Business is a fascinating process which changes daily, while capitalism of course is an historical entity that can be displaced only by revolution. We can eat our cake while mushing it around in our plate. "It is certainly beyond the present limits of capitalism to replace the guiding principle of produc-

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tion for profit by that of production for use—which is to say, it is impossible to redirect the main flow of economic effort, away from the pull of market considerations to areas established by public policy considerations." But all production for consumption — whether consumption by welfare administrations, the military, the scientific academy or ordinary suburbia — is for use as well as profit; and a market pulls differently according to whether it is free or managed — when the latter, the results are very much like those derived from "public policy considerations" even if not made by an officially constituted public government. If the alternative to the hoary capitalist presumption about the Profit Motive is thought to be the immediate construction of the humanist society of good will imagined by the classical socialists — then, sure, the old crap will continue. But if the question for the next several decades is, "Toward what and in consultation with whom will American business busy itself?" then the old crap requires some new if-this, then-that kind of analysis, which in all likelihood would be both interesting and complicated. In any event, it would be political and psychological — as befits the front-running technological society in major, not to say convulsive, transition.

The Limits of American Capitalism consists of two brief essays, the first being a determinedly unimaginative depiction of the current corporate economy, refracted through traditional economic notions, and the second turning out to be a much more worthwhile effort to state — in strophes of careful hesitation — the cataclysmic conflict between the old business system and the new technological order. Now, please notice the problem of critically evaluating a book like this: many educated people do not know that the United States is a corporate society which is not the same thing as a capitalist society; and many more are not as deeply aware as they should be that business and technology, although they sleep together every night, are (like many such) mortal enemies. In the initial essay dealing with the first point, Mr. Heilbroner depicts our present order in a flattened-out manner that is useful only if it is news — and how am I to know? The second essay is very good no matter who is reading it: the data and insights, the narrative line on the subjects of poverty, the military and especially the new problems of employment created by technological success are all interesting and presented with expert brevity. Even the downbeat tone is expressed with more effect, as when he refers to "the temptations of luxury consumption, and the general lack of concern in a nation lulled by middle-class images of itself," in telling us why the so-called problem of poverty is not apt to be solved within the next generation, although he believes it

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to be the chief issue that can be resolved without a radical reordering of society.

Still, the depressive mood of the book is consistent, overwhelming and self-inflicted by reason of the author's willful presumptions of clarity. But the author is better than this; and this result was unnecessary. Why popularize gloom in a reasonable tone of voice? With this method, even the Dark Forces are clarified to an unconscionable degree, and we are served up a future without potential disaster. What is presented here is history so well-managed for purposes of clear exposition that conflict appears only as bits and pieces of nominalism. But the main point is not that some of us may personally prefer a frantic cry to reasonable gloom, but that the dynamism and variety of the present (whether or not destructive) are sacrificed to the idea of an audience that does not even exist in the absence of that idea. Clarity of this high order is useless, or worse. For example, at page 90 he writes: "An economic transformation of capitalism of such magnitude that its big businesses become, in effect, public agencies is not a serious possibility for the foreseeable American future. . . ." This is offered in disallowing the possibility of nationalization. But an accurately dynamic depiction of the present would require the writer to note the variety of ways in which the big corporations *are* public agencies — and treat themselves, and are treated, as such. And it might be added that nationalization, because of changes in the property system, is quite unnecessary; it was propounded by the socialists mostly because they were anti traditional private property. (I have chosen to criticize Mr. Heilbroner's rhetoric, rather than what I divine to be his understanding. If I had been discussing the latter, I would suggest that his academic training has given him too much to unlearn concerning the centrality of free markets; and he has not learned as much as he could have from Adolf Berle with respect to the revolution in property forms which more fundamentally underlies the American corporate order.)

The two essays are united not only by mood and mistaken method, but by a theme as well, that as capitalism supplanted feudalism, the new technological order will supplant capitalism. "When" and "how" are the questions. When? Not for fifty years, says Mr. Heilbroner. How? By "a subversive process of historic change" in which the privileged groups of the old order are attracted, in spite of themselves, to the qualities of life of the new order. *Add*: as and when these are created, and made attractive and so on. Mr. Heilbroner finally says: "Veblen was too impatient for his engineers to take over; Schumpeter more realistic when he advised the intelligentsia to be prepared to wait in the

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wings for possibly a century. . . ." Nobody waits for a century. (For Veblen, the engineers were a metaphor; but that's another matter.) The intellectuals of the New Class are now gathering for a great national jamboree — under the expert auspices of an adventurous heir. In fifty years all but a handful of Ancient Mariners from the present intellectual areas will be dead.

"Why do societies resist change? A full explanation of social inertia must reach deep into the psychological and technical underpinnings of the human community. But in the context of our present concern we need not delve to such depths." Oh?

David T. Bazelon

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DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON

MAFIA VENDETTA. By Leonardo Sciascia. Knopf. $3.95.

THE COUNCIL OF EGYPT. By Leonardo Sciascia. Knopf. $4.95.

In southern Italy, the visitor from America, or from the Italian north, for that matter, encounters something he is inclined to call "oriental" about the inhabitants. Carlo Levi, exiled by the Fascists to Lucania, deep in the peninsula's instep, decided that his peasant neighbors were "pre-Christian" in their stoic despair, their distrust of all states and churches and of all abstract codes or slogans. A democratic government has not made so entire a change as one might suppose since Levi wrote, and attempts at political and social progress, the renovation of agriculture and the elimination of pervasive civic corruption still confront an indifference justified for centuries. It is an attitude to be found in many peasant cultures where life is lived in unquestioning submission to the vagaries as well as the rhythms of nature—and to social forces too remote or arbitrary to have relation to a man's own efforts—and where death, from one cause or another, is often violent and unexpected. It survives in the modern Italian south, and particularly in Sicily, where the bright monotony of Palermo's new apartment-house girdle, the crisp villas springing up along the fabulous ancient shore, signify not change, but a new assertion of old habits, power concentrated in a merciless few, every social resource draining inexorably, along legal and illegal channels, into certain hands, which in turn distribute, in an evil benevolence, a calculated quantity to an army of dependents. As the reformer soon discovers, the Sicilian continues to trust in no authority beyond the family, which is a kind of armed camp outside of which he cultivates an enormous wariness expressed in the typical indirection of his conversation. It is not surprising that Sicily's most famous apostle of reform, Danilo Dolci, has recognized that nothing is more necessary or more difficult in Sicily than the task of making a poor man think himself significant.

Leonardo Sciascia, Sicily's most discussed writer of the moment, has made these matters the theme of fiction. His identification with the Sicilian scene, particularly its unglamorous small-town and peasant aspect, has marked everything he has written since 1956 when he published "The Parishes of Regalpetra," a description of his native

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village which was marked by the same kind of astute and humble attention, amounting to poetry, that distinguished Levi's famous *Christ Stopped at Eboli* — or, to think of our own *Mezzogiorno* — James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* Since then, besides some stories, sketches, a play and an essay on Pirandello, he has written three notable short novels. The first, published here as *Mafia Vendetta,* brought him an immediate and dangerous fame, for it concerned a Mafia killing. His most recent, *A Ciascuno il Suo* ("To Each His Due") is another topical crime story, Sicilian style. The earlier historical novel just published in English, *The Council of Egypt,* is also determinedly preoccupied with the definition of Sicilian experience, an effort, like Lampedusa's *The Leopard,* to explain Sicily by her past.

For the form of *Mafia Vendetta* Sciascia apologizes a little disingenuously in a postscript, declaring that he was "unable to write the book with that complete freedom to which every writer is entitled," and consequently made more anonymous and abbreviated his references to current crime in Sicily and the national government, pruning it down severely to its present length, a little over a hundred pages. But it seems not so much a stripped-down novel as an achieved movie-script, and it is likely that Sciascia, like other contemporary Italian novelists, is inspired by Italy's greatest postwar art form. His novel, or novella, is built almost entirely of stretches of dialogue to which the barest minimum of narrative and description is added. The disconnections and obscurities that result really intensify the dramatic effect of the story, delaying the solution of the plot until its moral value has been explored.

For a "mystery," a "giallo," in the technical sense, is, of course, what the book half pretends to be. It is the story of a mysterious murder and of the policeman who sets himself to track the criminal. But nothing could be less commonplace than the unfolding revelations of this manhunt. For one thing, the murder turns out not to be that "crime of passion" beloved by the popular press, though that is exactly what it is made out to be by those who wish to disguise its true character. The murdered man is a small building contractor who had defied the organized interests controlling building in his town. As our Captain of *carabiniere* interrogates suspects and noses after evidence, the connection completes itself not merely between victim and assassin, but elongates to include the fingerman who set up the murder, the Mafia *capo* and his friends who ordered it, even the Honored Member from the district and the Ministry itself, in Rome. The establishment of guilt assumes the significance of social analysis, even though the police case collapses in the familiar Sicilian way when the accused

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acquire ironclad alibis certified by unimpeachable witnesses. And the book succeeds beyond its end as social accusation. All along the way we are shown the human beings who are made to play their roles by all that they are, all that their lives have been. Deeply informed by their experience are the conversations of villagers and cops, petty informers and big shots. And behind these portraits is history, often revealed in the only antiquities the common people of Sicily can call their own, the worn and distorted words of their dialect. There is the day the captain goes in search of a witness, also killed, and runs into an old farmer with a dog. The farmer cautions him not to pet the animal. "He'll let a stranger touch 'im and be reassured, and then bite 'im," he says. The dog's name is *Barruggieddu*, which the captain recognizes as a corruption of the word *bargello*, meaning "chief of police"—and he realizes immediately that he will learn nothing from a man taught to name his despicable dog after the "dogs of the law" by centuries of racial lessons in distrust.

The primary conflict in the book exists not merely between the captain's stratagems and his impediments, but between his own character and the world he strives to affect. An ex-Partisan and an idealist, as well as a Northerner, he is confronted in a memorable scene with an opposing kind of excellence in the old Mafia chief, who having never had occasion to exercise his opponent's virtues, still recognizes him to be, like himself, "a man" — where most others are half-men, pygmies, arse-crawlers, or, lowest of all, "quaquaraqua," "quacking ducks." And Captain Bellodi is honest enough to know himself honored by the comparison; there is, in the stubborn dignity of this tough disbeliever, something that is better, after all, than cowardice and sham. In letting his impulses as a reformer confront their only manly alternative in the Sicilian peasant negativism, Sciascia states his essential theme.

The Council of Egypt, somewhat labored and pallid by comparison, lacks the advantage of Sciascia's main asset, his gift for recording the behavior and speech of his contemporaries. It discovers the same contest of viewpoints as the earlier book in historic Palermo of the seventeen-eighties when a clever forger created a phony Arab codex justifying royal over aristocratic claims to inherited rights in Sicily. Guiseppe Vella is himself indifferent to the pretensions of either party, indifferent to historic truth; the forger merely seizes a personal opportunity. And his cynicism seems justified against the background sketched in by Sciascia—a profligate nobility, a brutalized populace, a remote and selfish royal authority. Only the young lawyer Di Blasi dreams of a noble republic of Sicily. And this idealist, Vella's opposite, is the one man in corrupt Palermo to win the swindler's regard. In

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the end, the enterprises of both fail — Di Blasi's premature revolutionary conspiracy brings him to the guillotine; Vella simply becomes bored and throws over his game, going willingly to prison out of *noia*, the one vulnerability of the nihilist. But each has given us an alternative to admire, an attitude.

As Lampedusa went back to the period of the *Risorgimento*, the epic era of nationalization which brought hope and then disappointment to Sicily, Sciascia reaches still further back into the past in *The Council of Egypt* to recount an episode out of the time when the French Revolution threw its sparks of idealist ardor into Europe's darkest corners, often to be extinguished in a moment. Perhaps all Sicilian history seems to many Sicilians to confirm their ingrained pessimism. For the present generation, of course, there is the ironic lesson of the postwar period. Whatever the triumph of the Resistance meant to the rest of Italy, in Sicily the victory over Fascism achieved by the American invasion brought back the Mafia in greater power than ever before. The conclusion of Sciascia's historical novel is nevertheless less dark than that of *The Leopard*, which lacked the image of a heroic Di Blasi, giving us instead only the superb and refined passivity of the prince, who anticipates an inevitable worsening of things. At the end of *Mafia Vendetta*, Captain Bellodi, thinking over his Sicilian experiences, vows to return, even if, he says, "Mi ci romperò la testa," "I break my head doing so" (which the present translation tamely gives as "even if it's the death of me"). But Sciascia's confidence in the value of idealism in Sicily is not a secure one. His most recent novel, not yet available in English, confronts the viewpoint of stoic despair with no such alternative any longer as Di Blasi or Captain Bellodi. In this second "giallo," which implicates not so much the organized Mafia, this time, as the state of mind which has been termed "lowercase mafia," the "detective" is only an uncommitted school teacher who somewhat idly, out of intellectual curiosity, gets at the truth about a murder. He does not intend to tell the police about his discoveries, but such an attitude, of course, is incomprehensible to those around him, and he dies for his pains, just as if he had believed in justice and retribution. His epitaph, spoken by a more prudent observer, is: "He was a cretin." The stone wall against which Captain Bellodi was willing to break his head is stouter than ever.

Millicent Bell

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LETTERS

JOHN BROWN'S BODY

Sirs:

Mr. Crews can't have his status quo and beat it too. He writes in "Love in the Western World" (*PR*, Spring 1967) that Marcuse's commitment to psychoanalysis is "far from revolutionary" but at the same time he contends that Norman O. Brown has exceeded the limits of psychoanalysis and has "subtly perverted" it. His criticism would be of greater interest if the task were to evaluate how closely Brown hews to the orthodox Freudian line, but it is precisely this which Brown claims not to do. In fact, he points out that the "foundations of psychoanalysis need reinterpretation."

Nor is Crews's criticism that "psychoanalysis for Brown is not science but poetic philosophy, just as its harshest critics have always said" relevant. Brown does not claim to expound a scientific point of view. He even goes so far as to ask for a "willing suspension of common sense" and speaks of an infusion of the divine madness as the best possible uncommon sense. Furthermore, one must ask Crews: is psychoanalysis a science?

Crews's insistence on psychoanalysis as science betrays the underlying assumption that factual positivism is a more reliable road to truth than poetic insight. This is the important issue between Crews and Brown. As an unacknowledged defense of a philosophical stance, Crews's critique is itself subject to the criticism he levels against Brown's treatment of psychoanalysis: it is "governed by the special requirements of his argument." Crews is trapping us in the subject–object dilemma that modern thought has been struggling to overcome and which he in fact praises Brown for seeing. At a time when science itself admits the need to speak metaphorically, it seems anachronistic that Crews should object to Brown's doing so in respect to human and historical reality.

Concerning historical r e a l i t y, Crews again misses Brown's intent, for their basic assumptions collide. We must assume, he says, that according to Brown, history is "heading for psychosis." Need we look further than the history of the last fifty years to see that this is

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so? It is not, however, that Brown considers history illusory, but that meaning is located elsewhere. Meaning, Brown suggests, lies not in the traditional understanding of history as past events, but in history as the possibility of a transformed consciousness that would free us of idolatry, of the "grip of the dead hand of the past on life in the present." Perhaps Brown's presentation of psychoanalysis as "a set of paradoxical propositions about human fate" truly illuminates the human condition and is not the disservice which Crews envisions.

Shirley Sugerman

Mr. Crews replies:

Someone who is serious about revolution ought to demand an analysis of present realities and a believable program (not just exhortations) for breaking out of them. Brown sensed this when he wrote *Life Against Death,* and labored to convince himself that psychoanalysis independently corroborated his religious goals. Much of what he turned up is impressive and intellectually liberating. The irony, however, is that in order to make psychoanalysis apocalyptic he had to lyricize the most dubious of Freud's hypotheses; some of his "divine madness" is nineteenth-century mechanistic biology dressed in Dionysian garb. This may not weaken Mrs. Sugerman's fervor about transformed consciousness, but it should matter to anyone who wonders whether Brown's dramatic predictions are likely to come true. Is history having a nervous breakdown? Can repression be abolished? These questions are in the realm of rational inquiry, but Mrs. Sugerman and other adepts of

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body-consciousness do not seem interested in having them answered except by fiat.

Psychoanalysis is a science, though a primitive one, by all criteria but those of the positivism Mrs. Sugerman thinks she is against. I wonder if she realizes that she is being a model positivist when she insists that poetic insight be kept quarantined from empirical scrutiny. That way lies posturing and quietism, not revolution; witness Brown's own progress to *Love's Body.*

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Sirs:

You have no doubt read of the arrest and harassment of Leslie Fiedler and his family by a variety of forces in Buffalo. The case has put the Fiedlers under severe financial stresses, involving their life insurance, fire insurance, and home mortgage. In particular, the case has already cost them $7000 in legal fees and will cost more as it proceeds. To help the Fiedlers in this crisis and to enable them to fight for the due process and freedoms involved, we are establishing the Fiedler Defense Fund. We are grateful to you for publishing this letter. We will be most grateful to anyone who sends in a contribution—to Fiedler Defense Fund, Norman N. Holland, Secretary, 131 High Park Blvd., Amerst, N. Y., 14226.

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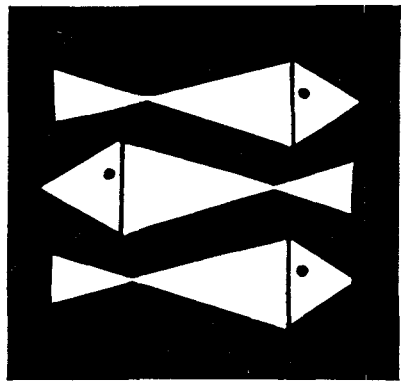

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